

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound

PLUS
JIM JARMUSCH
ON DOGS,
POETRY AND
IGGY POP

INTERVIEW: FROM 'GIRLS' TO 'PATERSON' AND 'SILENCE'

ADAM DRIVER

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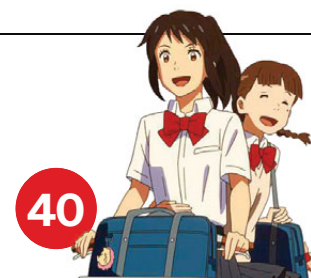


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The man of destiny

The story of the making of Abel Gance's *Napoleon* – and of the decades-long efforts to reconstruct the film – is a gripping tale of single-mindedness and megalomania. By **Paul Cuff**

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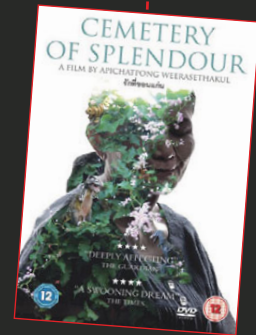
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Adam Driver photographed by Jeff Vespa/Contour By Getty Images

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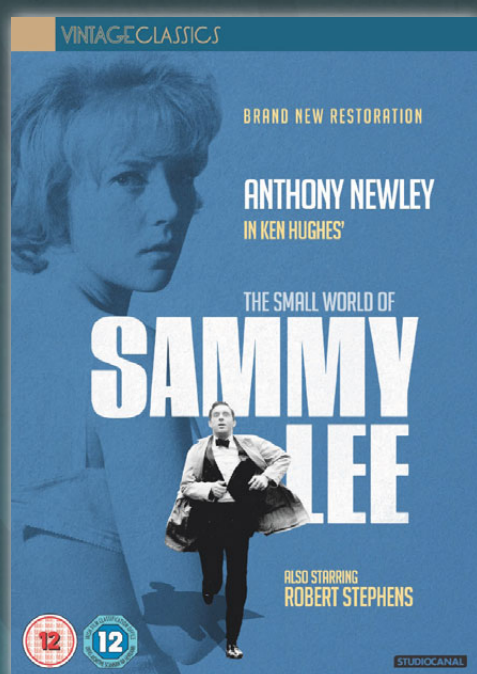


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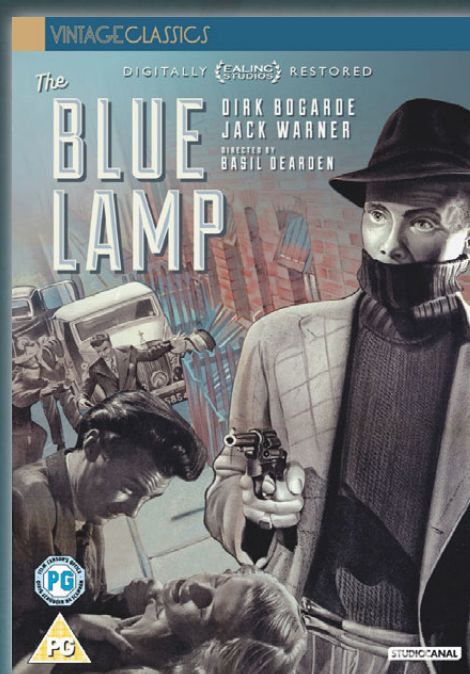
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Editorial Nick James



DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN

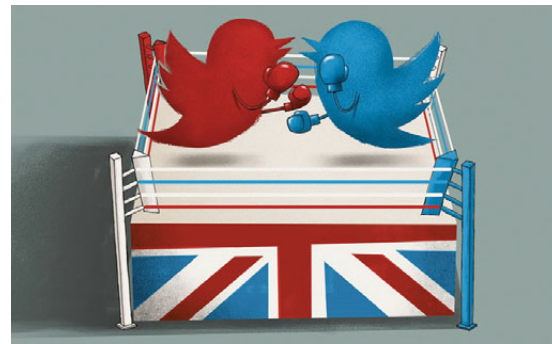
Much about the kerfuffle caused by reviews of Ken Loach's *I, Daniel Blake* in right-wing newspapers in the UK made me reluctant to revive it here. For one thing, it's obvious which side *Sight & Sound* is on, since we've published our admiration of the film more than once ('Cannes: hall of mirrors', *S&S*, July; 'Desperate measures', *S&S*, November). For another, many of you may have missed the row. It was mainly a social media spat, and therefore hardly earth-shattering: nowhere near as important, say, as the issues the film raises about welfare bureaucracy being deliberately structured to thwart people living on the poverty line, which audiences seem to recognise and respond to.

But what made it worth returning to was the fact that the fury took place mainly in the echo chambers of Twitter and Facebook, where opinions tend to meet like-minded approbation because we tend not to follow those we don't agree with. The *Sunday Times* reviewer Camilla Long, whose negative review triggered a welter of online antipathy, seemed as bewildered by the ferocity of her attackers as Ken Loach fans were outraged by her scepticism. Split Britain seemed to manifest itself in mutual incomprehension and contempt.

Long's review is quite nasty. She describes the film as a "small, sad, claustrophobic parable". Her first two paragraphs demean what she sees as the film's lack of glamour and the lead character Daniel Blake's smallness of ambition – "a small textureless nobody," she calls him. "For all its hideously condescending attempts at teeth-grinding realism," she says, "it feels unreal." Hideously condescending is an attitude she clearly understands. Her review climaxes by condemning the film for who might approve of it, calling it "misery porn for smug Londoners" and "a povvo safari for middle-class do-gooders". Many of the social media attacks on Long focused on the improbability that she, as a scion of privilege, could have any idea whether the film was realistic or not. Her response was to damn as trolls fellow professionals with substantial reputations.

But she was not alone. David Sexton in the *Evening Standard* described the film as "agitprop", although he conceded it is "surprisingly funny" and is filmed with "great naturalism". He describes the character of Blake as "Loach's dreamboat", someone who's paid his dues and never doffed his cap to authority, and ends with a cheap shot about whether the benefits claimants would be better off in North Korea. Toby Young in the *Daily Mail* attacked the whole basis of the film, presaging his remarks by saying, "I'm no expert on the welfare system," and then writing precisely as if he is. He suggested that Channel 4 show *Benefits Street* might be a more accurate reflection of people living on benefits. To which the only sensible response is, 'Really?'

But it's not my intention to mount a defence of the film here. Loach can do that much better than me. I'm



The row over 'I, Daniel Blake' took place mainly in the echo chambers of Twitter and Facebook, where opinions tend to meet like-minded approbation

more keen to argue that this row exposes some deficits within political cinema on both sides. To play devil's advocate for a moment, let's say that there is a problem with the cinema of social realism, in that its methods have become way too familiar, and, as I've argued before (Editorial, *S&S*, September 2015), too many of its clichés are lazily employed in some British films. Yet it's precisely because *I, Daniel Blake* was so restrained in the way that it avoided these, compared with the obvious stridency of some of Loach's less artistically successful films, that I found it so convincing.

It's clear that cinema is becoming more of a locus for political debate than it has been for a while (the success of documentary features is an indication of that), and yet very few British or American fiction films have any overt political edge. One wonders why, in the austerity aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, there has been nothing like the run of anti-Thatcher films in the 1980s? There's an equal deficit in the quality of writing about film. Not since the days when critics Alexander Walker and Mark Kermode regularly crossed swords on censorship issues have we seen a row about films like this. The difference is that those debates took place in printed publications, and involved serious engagement and a modicum of mutual professional respect, something social media seems to have demolished on both sides. This latest spat seems more like the furious bumping of separate bubbles.

Loach would no doubt say that the political lines have been laid bare here and that you must choose your side. The sense that these reviewers are writing what their publications' proprietors want to hear is strong. But buried among the deprecation in Long's review, she does concede that one scene is "brilliant" and that Hayley Squires is mostly good. "It's not a bad film, or stupidly made," she says. Well, if so, why review it as if it is?

IN THE FRAME

BLACK IN THE UNION JACK

A selection of films charting the history of Britain's black population offers a celebration of diversity and a grim reminder of racial strife

By Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff

'Black Britain on Film', a new BFI Player collection drawn from the National Film Archive, and spanning more than 100 years from the Edwardian era to the present day, is part of a larger, beautiful movement to reclaim the history of the African diaspora in our country. Not only will past broadcasts have played a critical role in how race came to be defined in the UK – as Stuart Hall explains in his preface to Sarita Malik's book *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television* – they will have influenced and documented "political struggle, popular criticism and campaigning". To have access to an archive as rich as the one the BFI has curated is a timely pleasure.

Earlier this month I was at the launch of the BBC's 'Black and British' season, where BBC Two's director Patrick Holland spoke about how the investigation into our black past has to extend far beyond Black History Month in October and that "producing a season doesn't mean that we can tell ourselves we have told the story of black Britain and move on". Simultaneously, Black in the Day is making it its mission to create an online archive of black British life from the 1900s to the early 2000s; and Afropunk, a music festival for 'the other black experience', finally came to London in September. In many ways the narrative is one of hope and development – we are taking our story into our own hands and every day there is a new organisation, collective or safe space springing up that puts black voices at its centre.

By contrast, some of the films in the BFI's collection were, for me, a sad reminder of how the development of our country has been stymied by opposition to the diversification of ethnicity. *Divide and Rule – Never!* (1978), a documentary focusing on young working-class Londoners from varying ethnic backgrounds and their attitudes towards race, was made many years before I was born, but the rhetoric of intolerance was all too familiar. While the teens on screen looked far less polished on camera than my own YouTube



Ngozi Onwurah's *The Body Beautiful* (1990)

generation, their honesty and genuineness shone through as they recounted experiences of racism and prejudice similar to my own. Mullet-haired boys who were former members of the fascist National Front were reminiscent of some of the rhetoric from the ugliest fringes of the Brexit debate as they explained the reasons why they went around beating up 'coloureds' and Jews. Outright racism was also the focus of *Burning Cross Race Attack* (1965) – a news broadcast recounting fears over the rise of a Ku Klux Klan-style organisation operating in the Midlands – and rare film footage showing the aftermath of a race riot in Toxteth in *Liverpool 8* (1972).

But as a young mixed-black woman with Caribbean heritage, I was naturally drawn to films that might mirror my experience of Britain in some way. *Cedar Wood & Silk* (1995) fell into this category: ballsy and humorous, it showed how Jamaican mothers can struggle to relate to their British-born daughters. My own Nanny moved here from Jamaica at 16 and had her three daughters and son in quick succession from the age of 19. I have always wondered how she coped with bringing up a family so far away from home. Filmmaker Jillian Li-Sue's knack for bringing out the humour in the idiosyncracies of older Caribbean women ("You and I will never see eye to eye with clothes," says one character, Sandra, to her mother. "I'll go out, I'll buy a new pair of jeans, I'll wear them once, mother, *once*, then they'll disappear for a week and end up as your new shopping bag!") will not be lost on anyone with West Indian relatives and friends.

Dwelling on similar themes of mother-daughter relationships, *The Body Beautiful* (1990) left me in tears. A delicate film which takes a stark look at the sexuality of the director's mother following a mastectomy she was forced to have shortly after giving birth to a mixed-race child, it is an autobiographical masterpiece from Ngozi Onwurah. It addresses issues of race with a deft touch and feels like a development from her earlier, but also excellent film *Coffee Coloured Children* (1988), which directly depicted the identity issues commonly faced by black mixed-race children, so unsure of where they belong.

A particularly interesting aspect of the BFI's collection is the number of films showing snippets of life for black people before the arrival of the *H.M.S. Windrush* and the first wave of Caribbean migrants in the late 1940s. Although I found it slightly harder to connect with some of the films from before World War II, it was interesting to be reminded that we did already have small black communities in pockets of the country, like Liverpool. *Springtime in an English Village* (1944), which sees a buoyant young black girl with an Afro being crowned May Queen with a wreath of flowers and waited upon by adoring white classmates is a particular highlight, along with *A World Is Turning* (1948), a documentary highlighting the achievements and talents of the black community in the 1940s.

Black masculinity is another important thread running through the films. It was black Caribbean men who made that initial journey overseas to the UK after conscription during the war, and their complex masculinity is illuminated by the different contexts offered in the films. In *Rooted* (1997), a sketch cartoon, a man discovers the importance of his African heritage; while *Ten Bob in Winter* (1963) looks at the hierarchies of class in the black male community and our propensity to support each other financially despite it (with the traditional 'pardner' collective savings schemes within Caribbean communities, for example).

All in all, this is a fantastic collection of films, many of which have long been hidden from view, and I would warmly recommend them to anyone who has an interest in British history. 

 Watch the films at player.bfi.org.uk/collections/black-britain-on-film

Animation festivals

Two festivals gathering the best new animated films are on the horizon: Manchester Animation Festival (15-17 November, HOME), which includes a tribute to Aardman; and the London International Animation Festival (2-11 December, Barbican). Both events celebrate British animator Chris Shepherd, with a retrospective in Manchester and the first peek of his short 'Johnno's Dead' (right) in London.



A Museum of Everyday Life: Cinephilia and Collecting

Drawing on The Cinema Museum's collections, this exhibition (until 16 December) at Birkbeck's Peltz Gallery, London, uncovers the archives, scrapbooks and records of amateur film enthusiasts from World War II to today. Among the fascinating exhibits is projectionist Graham Head's snippets of celluloid, which he cut from every reel of film he ever showed and then catalogued in brown envelopes.





(Clockwise from top left) *Burning Cross Race Attack*, *Cedar Wood & Silk*, *Rooted*, *Ten Bob in Winter*, *Springtime in an English Village* and *Divide and Rule – Never!*

London Korean Film Festival

Lee Kyoung-mi's thriller 'The Truth Beneath' (right), Hong Sangsoo's 'Yourself and Yours' and Im Heung-soon's documentary 'Factory Complex' are just a few of the highlights on offer at this celebration of Korean cinema. Also enticing is a survey of the country's female filmmakers stretching back to Park Nam-ok's 'The Widow' in 1952. The festival takes place in venues across London (until 27 November), with a selection of films touring to Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham and Belfast.



In the Heat of the Night

Witness Sidney Poitier deliver his famous "They call me Mister Tibbs" retort on the big screen when this tense 1967 thriller is rereleased across the UK on 18 November. Poitier stars in one of his greatest roles as a detective from Philadelphia who joins forces with Rod Steiger's local police chief to hunt down a murderer in a small racist Southern town.



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LITTLE WHITE LIES

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KISS ME

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ALEXANDRA-THERESE KEINING

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HE'S NO
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PARIS IS BURNING

Houda Benyamina's explosive *Divines* follows the criminal antics of a pair of schoolgirls from the wrong side of the tracks in Paris

By Simran Hans

In French director Houda Benyamina's feature-length debut *Divines*, Dounia (Oulaya Amamra) and Maimouna (Déborah Lukumuena) are schoolfriends who turn to a life of crime in a bid to escape the *banlieues*. With their physical comedy and contrasting little-and-large builds, Dounia and Maimouna have been described by Benyamina as her very own Laurel and Hardy. But an even more accurate comparison might be Robert De Niro and Harvey Keitel in *Mean Streets* (1973), both in the way their respective straight man and comic relief relationship plays out, and in the pathos and melodrama at the core of their friendship.

The self-schooled director, who was previously an acting coach at the workshop she founded in 2006 (1000 Visages), received the Camera d'Or for best first feature at Cannes this year. Inspired by the restless energy that fuelled the Paris riots in 2005 and touched by a documentary she once saw that featured two female prison inmates dancing in front of the police, Benyamina decided to channel the disillusionment and dissent of the city's underclass into a restless story of personal protest. An often gritty urban drama, *Divines* may invite comparison with recent *banlieue*-set films like Céline Sciamma's *Girlhood* (2014) or Mathieu Kassovitz's *La Haine* (1995), but Benyamina's film, with its tough-talking heroines and fiery climax, is unabashedly populist in tone.

Simran Hans: You've said Laurel and Hardy inspired the characters. Were there any other influences?

Houda Benyamina: When I was a child my best friend looked physically a bit like Maimouna's character. We often messed about and found ourselves in quite funny burlesque situations, so I wanted to recreate that.

SH: Does that mean you were like Dounia when you were younger?

HB: When I was younger – I mean, I still do – I felt like a bit of an outsider, which fed into feelings of injustice, of rebellion, of wanting to assert myself. The need for recognition and acceptance is where I recognise myself in Dounia's character. Dounia doesn't want to just exist in the world; she wants to be looked at. She's also a character who looks at men.

SH: Was the female gaze something you actively tried to explore?

HB: That's exactly something I wanted to show. Grace and sensuality are things that men have as much as women – and women can express desire and sexuality in the same way men can.

SH: How did you come up with the scene that sees the girls drive an imaginary Ferrari?

HB: The way I develop a story is an ongoing back and forth between script and performance. For the Ferrari scene and the scene where they all shout, "Money money money" – that's all inspired by my little brother, who told me a dream he had. It made me think that that's



Partners in crime: Oulaya Amamra as Dounia and Déborah Lukumuena as Maimouna in *Divines*

I love Ken Loach, but I didn't really want to go for social realism. I wanted to inject a bit of magic

what young people these days dream about. I love Ken Loach, but I didn't really want to go for social realism. I wanted to inject a bit of magic.

SH: How did you find the two lead actresses and build the chemistry between them?

HB: Oulaya [Amamra] is actually my little sister. I didn't really want her to play this part because I didn't feel she was right for the role because she had a very different upbringing to me. We put her in a private Catholic school and she did ballet... She's very feminine, very sensitive and she didn't have this tough exterior that Dounia should have. But she really proved herself; she took up boxing, she became quite insolent, she was expelled from her school! She increasingly embodied Dounia's character. Also, I trained her as an actress when she was young – I used to teach theatre, so [I knew] she was technically skilled.

The actors were immersed in the universe that they were made to act in. They slept in a Roma camp, they took up boxing and I made them spend a lot of time together, playing with mobile phones and filming each other, so they developed this natural friendship in the end.

SH: Why did you choose to include mobile phone footage in the opening credits?

HB: The phones embody how young people communicate today; the way they use Snapchat stories to document and stage their own lives – they're actors in their own lives. I liked using

this device to show the way she falls in act three – aesthetically it was the right thing to do.

SH: From Dounia's Taxi Driver imitation to the scene where her body is covered in cash, there are several nods to Scorsese. What were some of your other cinematic reference points?

HB: My references are from across the world and across the board. Some of my inspiration comes from filmmakers like Ettore Scola, [Pier Paolo] Pasolini, [Jean-Pierre] Melville, and you're right about the references to Scorsese. His particular interest in the power of money and the power of the sacred [is something] I really identify with.

SH: This film is being distributed through Netflix. Do you think it's still important to show films in the cinema?

HB: When I first heard the Netflix offer I thought, "Right, my film's not going to be screened in cinemas," and for me that wasn't necessarily a good thing. But then I realised what it actually meant to have a film in cinemas, in the jungle that is the world of cinema distribution, where if you don't have enough entries, enough seats booked, they close you down after two weeks.

What the Netflix deal has allowed is for this film to be distributed in 130 countries to 83 million people, and no distributor would've been able to do that. I'm not a snob; I really want the film to be seen. And what Netflix has allowed is a real democratisation of film. It's made it accessible, especially to young people who only really watch their films on tablets or on their phones. And also cinema tends to be quite expensive – I feel it gives people the opportunity to see these films. 

Divines is available to view on Netflix from 18 November

FROM THE VISIONARY DIRECTOR OF 'RUSSIAN ARK'



"A FASCINATING ESSAY AND MEDITATION ON ART,
HISTORY AND HUMANITY'S IDEA OF ITSELF"

PETER BRADSHAW, THE GUARDIAN



"SOKUROV'S IDEAS HAVE A PHILOSOPHICAL DEPTH AND RICHNESS
THAT ARE FOUND ALMOST NOWHERE ELSE IN CINEMA"

ROBBIE COLLIN, THE TELEGRAPH



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MASKED AND ANONYMOUS



(Clockwise from top left) *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Eyes Without a Face*, *V for Vendetta*, *The Mask*, *Black Girl* and *The Dark Knight Rises*

Veiling a character's face can unleash hidden aspects of the self, from unexpected heroism to monstrous violence



By Hannah McGill

Masks, as any drama student or amateur psychologist will tell you, both conceal and reveal: by hiding the face, they free up the

wearer to be his or her hidden self, or to embody broader truths about humanity. The masks worn in the theatre of ancient Greece and of the Japanese Noh tradition traditionally helped to distract the audience from the actors' personal characteristics, to effect real transformation in the eyes of the audience and to create mythic, exaggerated, extra-human characters. The masks worn by our contemporary iteration of the extra-human, superheroes, disguise real identities but also release hidden aspects of the self, lending shy Stanley Ipkiss some of the uninhibited sexual mojo of his titular character in *The Mask* (1994) and turning nerdy Peter Parker into the kind of guy who gets upside-down kisses in rainstorms in *Spider-Man* (2002).

Of course, the elemental thing released can also be grisly and destructive, as with a supervillain – “No one cared who I was until I put on the mask,” says Bane in *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012) – or a horror movie monster. The mask worn by the cannibal Leatherface in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974) releases in the wearer not a more sophisticated self, but a more grossly instinctive, elemental and ferocious one: it reduces him to meat just as he reduces his victims to meat. The removal of Leatherface's individuality, suggests Christopher Sharrett in his essay ‘The Idea of Apocalypse in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*’, symbolises the cannibal's rejection

of the normal social order: “Leatherface's mask does not have the social function of some ritual acts; it merely serves to cover up and terrorize by reminding the spectator of corruption, the degradation of the flesh, disease, insanity, death.”

Masking an actor for the whole duration of a film is also disruptive, in the sense of denying the centrality of the actor's face to his or her performance and star persona – or separating that persona into components. James Earl Jones provided the voice but not the physicality for Darth Vader in the first *Star Wars* trilogy (1977–83), a performance initially left uncredited but subsequently deemed iconic. Edith Scob in *Eyes Without a Face* (1960) demonstrates the sinister but affecting potential of a performance that uses only the eyes. And Hugo Weaving wears a Guy Fawkes mask throughout his central performance as a terrorist/messiah in *V for Vendetta* (2006).

V for Vendetta puts a positive spin on the idea of anonymity in the cause of social disorder; and the mask it features has become rather better known than the film (or the 1982 source graphic novel by Alan Moore) in which it features, having been adopted as an emblem by anti-government and anti-establishment activist groups, including Occupy and Anonymous. Perhaps the only other mask to have outgrown its film origins so comprehensively is the stylised nod to Edvard Munch that features in *Scream* (1996) and its sequels: initially just one component of that film's barrage of smirky cultural references, the mask is now recognisable as Halloween garb even to people unfamiliar with either the paintings that inspired it or the film in which it features.

The mask in Ousmane Sembène's *Black Girl* (1965) is only briefly worn, but still

Edith Scob in ‘Eyes Without a Face’ demonstrates the sinister potential of a performance that uses only the eyes

dominates the narrative, watching over Senegalese servant Diouana (Mbissine Thérèse Diop) and her white employer (Anne-Marie Jelinek) as their relationship disintegrates. Diouana presents the mask to Madame as an impulsive gift to show her appreciation at being granted a job; her employers' acquisitive approach to Africa is evident when Madame's husband examines the object and declares that it “seems like the real thing”.

Back at their home in France, as Diouana finds herself treated with increasing contempt, the mask becomes emblematic of her Africanness: a matter of little concern to her before, in her freedom, but more and more significant as her sense of self is deliberately diminished. The African object is fetishised by being placed on the wall, just as the mistress's white dinner guests coo over exotic African food; but the humanity of the real African in the room, Diouana, is disregarded. Her response – resistance, anger, surrender and finally death – represents the most tragic trajectory available to a colonised nation.

The fact that Sembène specifically cites his film's conflict between its two women – the mistress's husband is far more sympathetic to Diouana, reminding his wife when they struggle over the mask that it is Diouana's property – adds an uncomfortable gender element to the film's presentation of race and colonisation. The worst excesses of imperial theft and exploitation, it implies, pertain to female acquisitiveness and vanity. It is Diouana's African boyfriend who tries to politicise her out of her naive investment in French glamour and sophistication; and Madame's husband who respects Diouana's memory enough to return the mask to her hometown after her death. With the final shot of the film – the young village boy who was its original owner lowering the mask to look directly at the viewer – Sembène confronts the audience both with its own complicity in perceiving or presenting all Africans as children, and with the defiance it can expect to meet in response. 



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UNITED STATES OF LOVE

From the director of
FLOATING SKYSCRAPERS

A film by
TOMASZ WASILEWSKI



"There's no denying that Wasilewski
is one of cinema's most promising new voices"

CINEVUE



"Remarkable, unconventional and compassionate"

THE UPCOMING

matchbox films

IN CINEMAS **18 NOVEMBER**

IT'S ALL TRUE

The ghost of the great Orson Welles loomed large during a chance encounter with a waiter in a small Arizona town



By Mark Cousins

Is it possible to tell a story just by listing its facts? Could I get through this column by just telling you the incidents

and where they took place? Can I deadpan this, like Hemingway? Let's try.

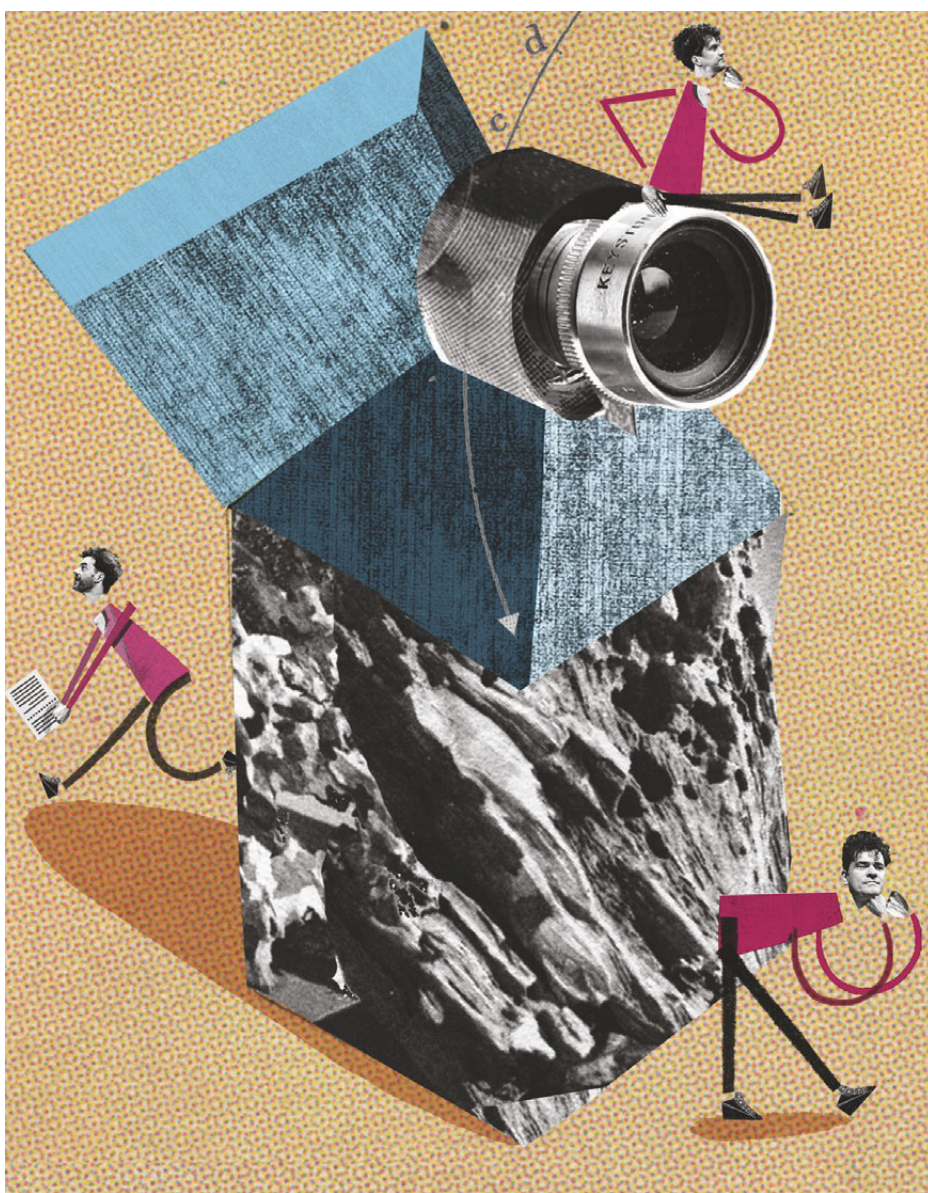
Antrim, Northern Ireland, late 1970s. I see Orson Welles's film *Touch of Evil* (1958) on the BBC. Twenty years later, in 1997, I go to Los Angeles for the first time, and head straight for Venice, CA, where the long opening tracking shot of *Touch of Evil* was filmed. I figure out its route, and walk it.

Nineteen years later, in Traverse City, Michigan, I'm introduced to Welles's youngest daughter, Beatrice. We talk and, as a result, I begin a film about Welles's drawings and paintings. Two months later I travel to the small town of Sedona, Arizona, where parts of Nicholas Ray's *Johnny Guitar* (1954) were shot, where Beatrice Welles is staying and where she first went with her father and mother, Paola Mori, who had a house there. She's told me to wait for her in a restaurant. It has a panoramic view of the red rocks of Sedona, geologically the same as the buttes of Monument Valley.

As I wait and eat, I write. I'm there for three hours, so my waiter asks me what I'm doing. I say I'm planning a film on Orson Welles. The waiter blanches and says that he has, in his apartment, a lens that was used to shoot some of *Citizen Kane* (1941). I'm surprised and, given how unlikely this is, am doubtful. But then he returns with an old wooden box. It's lined with velvet and holds a bowed rectangular glass structure framed in aged wood and held together with metal attachments. The waiter says he is J.B. Turner, a grandson of Alex Phillips, the cinematographer discovered by Mary Pickford who made his career in Mexico, shooting films for Luis Buñuel, Arturo Ripstein, Roberto Gavaldón and Emilio Fernández. I know a little about Phillips and recall that he trained one of Mexico's most significant DPs, Gabriel Figueroa, who shot John Ford's *The Fugitive* (1947) and Buñuel's *Los olvidados* (1950). J.B. tells me Figueroa was taught by Gregg Toland, who shot *Citizen Kane*. Inside the box is a letter that says Toland gave Phillips the lens.

I photograph it and text the pictures to cinematographer Christopher Doyle. He replies, saying he has sent the images to experts in LA and that the object is an aspheron lens attachment, of the right age for *Citizen Kane*. Two days later, I introduce J.B. to Beatrice. They have lived in the same small town for many years, but have never met. Beatrice says that, if the aspheron was really used to shoot *Citizen Kane*, it's the first time she's touched something that was on that film's set.

That's the bare bones of the story. Did you believe it all? Did you inflect it as you read, adding your own reactions? I wanted to as I wrote. I



The waiter blanches and says that he has a lens that was used to shoot some of Citizen Kane. I'm surprised and doubtful

wanted to describe how, when I saw *Touch of Evil* in my teens, a door opened for me. I wanted to tell you what I'd heard about Welles's daughter before I met her, and how she was unlike my expectations. I wanted to mention what fun she is as she drinks martinis. I wanted to say that *Johnny Guitar* is baroque like *Touch of Evil*, and that the sublime Mercedes McCambridge – Beatrice Welles's godmother – is uncontainable in both. I wanted to say that Sedona is a bit like Carmel or Palm Springs. I wanted to tell you that J.B. speaks beautiful Spanish and that I want to collaborate with him on something about his grandfather, whose story tells us so much about migration in early cinema, its gold rush, meritocracy and pride.

I wanted to say that the aspheron should be in a museum, displayed on a turntable as if

it's from a lighthouse. I wanted to write 1,000 words about lighthouses and films. I wanted to make you laugh with my Beatrice Welles rock-chick tales, and mention that I got to handle her father's drawings, and that the abstract painting that he did after Universal interfered with *Touch of Evil* is like a painting by Max Ernst, who lived in Sedona and painted the same red rocks that Welles painted. I wanted to sidetrack into Welles and surrealism and then sidetrack from that sidetrack, to mention surrealist artist Dorothea Tanning, who also lived in Sedona, and who lived into her hundreds.

More than any of these, I wanted to say that a fiction film about Orson Welles would struggle to make work a scene in which a random waiter had suddenly produced a relic from *Citizen Kane*. Implausibility is the enemy in fiction. It makes the job an uphill one. In a documentary it is a friend. It is downhill.

In other words, I wanted to tell my story as if it had twists and turns, rises and falls, atmospherics and a sense of place, like that opening tracking shot in *Touch of Evil*. ☺

DEVELOPMENT TALE

BLEED FOR THIS



Going for broke: Miles Teller as Vinny Pazienza, who came back to win a world boxing title a year after breaking his neck

A movie about one of the great boxing comebacks turned out to be a comeback for writer-director Ben Younger

By Charles Gant

Ben Younger would be the first to admit that when his agent at CAA sent him to meet the original producers of *Bleed for This*—recounting one of the greatest comebacks in boxing history—his career was hardly at its hottest point. After his admired 2000 debut *Boiler Room*, he took five years to deliver indie romantic comedy *Prime*, and now it was 2012 with nothing more to show for himself. As for the two men he was meeting, Chad Verdi and Noah Kraft, their producer credits at the time (*Inkubus*, *Loosies*, *Infected*) were hardly impressive.

“I think that they put Chad and I together because I was someone that had sort of had their moment and it had passed,” says Younger. “It wasn’t like a proper studio meeting. They weren’t putting me together with [powerhouse producer] Lorenzo di Bonaventura or someone.”

Moreover, *Bleed for This*—the story of Italian American boxer Vinny Pazienza, who broke his neck in a car crash, coming back in 1992 to win the super middleweight world title—had been in development since 2008, with several commissioned screenplays already in the shredder. “I almost didn’t go to the meeting. It was

raining, and I was on a motorcycle. In LA it rains ten days a year. My friend who I was with said, ‘You should just go.’ I had nothing going on.”

Younger had lost career momentum trying to make a motorbike racing film called *Isle of Man*—a passion project that is now in fact moving forward. “You have to go back further to understand what my mindset was,” he explains. “*Boiler Room* got made fairytale-like. It was easy. Then I took five years off. And then *Prime* got made because Meryl Streep’s doing my movie. So I had this idea that was twice confirmed that I could do that. That I could just fuck about for four years and then come back and make a film. And then *Isle of Man* was the one where I got the wake-up call. I took the same three, four years, I lived on the *Isle of Man* for a time. I went to the TT races year after year.”

Then began the search for producer partners, actors and financing. “I could find none of the above. Everyone was like, ‘What is this? We don’t know what this sport is. You’ve just come off a romantic comedy.’ And by ‘just,’ I mean three and a half years ago. ‘We don’t know what to do with you, or this.’ And then I just kind of disappeared for a while.”

In fact, Younger relocated to Costa Rica, where a friend was having personal and family issues and needed help running his restaurant. He learned to fly, and got his pilot’s licence. Then he returned to Brooklyn and raced professionally on his motorbike, also earning money rewriting Hollywood screenplays—including a big-budget

Formula 1 movie for Warners that didn’t get made. It was after making an agent switch within CAA—“I moved laterally, and finally found my guy, Craig Brody”—that *Bleed for This* came into view.

The meeting did not go well. “We left thinking, ‘We’re not going to work together.’ Because Chad said, ‘I want to do the *Blind Side* of boxing movies.’ I said, ‘I’m not your guy. Have you seen *Boiler Room*? That’s not who I am.’ I said, ‘You’ve just told me over lunch that when Vinny went on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*, his girlfriend at the time was a Penthouse Pet of the year. She was wearing a T-shirt that said ‘Property of Paz’. I said, ‘That’s the movie I want to make.’ He was, like, ‘No way.’ I said, ‘Thank you for lunch. Great meeting you.’ Walked away.”

“I don’t know what happened, but within ten days he called and said, ‘Can you write a really small version of this movie, like a \$2 million version? If you can keep it really contained, then go ahead and write your version.’”

Younger banked his commencement fee, and started work, initially as a simple writing assignment—“I never thought in a million years I would direct the movie.” His ambitions changed as he developed a personal connection

That was a nice meeting for me. Scorsese was just telling me: ‘I’m a fan, I liked your movie, what are you working on?’

to the subject, but so too did the scope of the film. "When I handed in the script, I gave Chad something we hadn't agreed on. I gave him a \$10 million [budget] screenplay. He said, 'I don't know what to do with this.' I said, 'Great, give me the script back, you don't have to pay me [the rest of the fee], I'll keep you on as a producer, but now I own it.'" Younger likewise became a producer, later bringing on Bruce Cohen, whose credits include *American Beauty* (1999), *Milk* (2008) and *Silver Linings Playbook* (2012).

Meanwhile, the filmmaker worked on refining his script. Without a producer or studio figure to submit notes on his drafts, he turned to his friend Scott Silver, co-writer of *The Fighter* (2010), for input. "Whatever those years did to me, they made me more collaborative and less proprietary," says Younger. "I was able to hear Scott tear pieces of the script apart, whereas earlier it would have been too devastating. He would just write in red, 'Another montage? Are you fucking kidding me?' OK, that's coming out. And then I brought on Bruce Cohen, who is absolutely not a yes man."

Bleed for This found its leading actor in Miles Teller, while Aaron Eckhart signed on as trainer Kevin Rooney. When it came to financing, Chad Verdi came up trumps, securing the \$6.1 million production budget from a single source: Joshua Sason of New York investment firm Magna. "Chad's great. Chad knows where his strongest suits are, and that was definitely one of them, helping us find this young man. But then Scorsese closed it. I don't know that Joshua would have written the cheque without Marty."

Scorsese and his production partner Emma Tillinger Koskoff became involved after the filmmaker contacted Younger to let him know that *Boiler Room* had been a useful reference for his crew when making *The Wolf of Wall Street* (2013). "So that was actually a really nice meeting for me. He was just telling me: 'I'm a fan, I liked your movie, what are you working on?'" Younger pitched him *Bleed for This* – "It checks off all his boxes: Italian American, New England, fight movie" – and two weeks later Scorsese offered to help the movie get made, boarding as an executive producer. "Marty sat in a room with Josh for 15 minutes, and I don't know if he literally came out of the room and wrote the cheque, but that's pretty much how it went."

When it came to determining writing credits, the Writers Guild of America awarded Younger sole screenplay credit, while 'story by' was assigned to Younger and writing assistant Pippa Bianco (who submitted jointly as a team), sharing with Angelo Pizzo, who wrote one of the earlier drafts.

"I never read any of the other scripts until we went to arbitration," says Younger. "But the arbitration committee proceeds with the notion that every writer has read the drafts beforehand. At this point if you're going to write your letter to the arbitration committee, you might as well read them, because they're going to assume you did. So I finally did read Angelo Pizzo's draft, and I was very pleased to know that – forget similar stories – we didn't even look at the same period of Vinny's life." 

***Bleed for This* is released on 2 December and will be reviewed in our next issue**

THE NUMBERS MY SCIENTOLOGY MOVIE

By Charles Gant

Speaking to *Sight & Sound* last month, *My Scientology Movie* producer Simon Chinn looked forward to the film's UK release, suggesting the Louis Theroux-fronted documentary would "significantly out-gross" Alex Gibney's 2015 Scientology title *Going Clear*. That prediction has proved wildly cautious, and *My Scientology Movie* is the surprise indie smash of the year.

Like other UK distributors, Altitude tracked the film when it premiered at the BFI London Film Festival in October last year. As Altitude's distribution boss Hamish Moseley explains, "We liked it but just weren't sure where it fitted in our slate." After a good experience distributing another of Chinn's films, *Bolshoi Babylon*, in January, Altitude made its move in March. "We realised *My Scientology Movie* was still available, and we just re-evaluated the film and thought, we could do something with this."

Regarding competitors' caution towards the title, marketing manager James Warren comments, "The biggest risk was that audiences might just think it's another TV production of Louis. That must have been weighing on a few people's minds." Moseley adds: "And with *Going Clear*, it probably felt like there has already been a definitive theatrical documentary on Scientology, and perhaps there won't be an appetite in the near future. That will have been in the con pile for other distributors."

A strong response from exhibitors, and growing awareness of the size of Theroux's fanbase, nurtured by Netflix, encouraged Altitude to launch the film with a big Q&A event at the 2,500-capacity Royal Festival Hall. When the venue sold out in 48 hours, the distributor applied to the BFI Audience Fund for support for a live stream into cinemas. As for the release date, Altitude sniffed a counter-programming opportunity. "The *Girl on the Train* was out on 7 October," Moseley says, "which was keeping the date quite free of other titles – it's such a juggernaut."



Cult viewing: Louis Theroux

Theroux's social channels – 1.51 million Twitter followers, 714,000 likes on Facebook – proved vital to disseminating the message. Warren says, "The numbers we got launching our trailer on Louis's page was something we'd not seen before. We were in the millions in 24 hours."

My Scientology Movie opened with £107,000 from 26 cinemas, including previews of £13,000, then adding a giant £419,000 from 246 venues for the Adam Buxton-hosted Royal Festival Hall event. After 18 days, the total was up to £940,000 – more than 12 times *Going Clear*'s lifetime total of £76,000. The film has performed particularly well outside London, especially in Glasgow, Bristol, Manchester and Newcastle. Crucially, even venues – typically multiplexes – that were carrying just the Buxton-hosted event agreed to play the trailer. "We've had reports of the trailer being played in front of *Bridget Jones's Baby*," says Warren. "All credit to those cinemas that did that."

Documentaries traditionally play to an older audience, and Altitude had initially identified the primary market as 35-plus; so the film's younger reach has been a bonus. "I think Netflix has been responsible for the younger influx," says Warren. "The film is definitely reaching that 18-to-25 audience."

Moseley adds, "That's what's been really encouraging. This will have been thousands of young people's first experience of a documentary in cinemas. Hopefully they'll come back and watch more independent films." 

TOP BRITISH DOCUMENTARIES AT THE UK BOX OFFICE

Film	Year	Gross
One Direction: This Is Us	2013	£8,005,391
Amy	2015	£3,763,752
Senna	2011	£3,173,400
Touching the Void	2003	£2,643,252
TT3D: Closer to the Edge	2011	£1,339,637
The Imposter	2012	£1,134,854
Marley	2012	£990,508
My Scientology Movie	2016	£940,178*
Man on Wire	2008	£879,377
Supersonic	2016	£712,939*

*gross at press time

THE NATURAL

In only a few short years, Adam Driver has rocketed to global fame in the 'Star Wars' franchise from his role in HBO's 'Girls'. But as he hits the screens as a poetry-loving bus driver in Jim Jarmusch's 'Paterson', he insists that his only game-plan is to try to work with great directors

By Nick Pinkerton

The cliché about male actors is that they have to age into serious, hefty roles, to take on a few crinkles and grey hairs for 'character' – but Adam Driver has never lacked for character. In a field of symmetrical and interchangeably bland leading men, he's a crookedly handsome all-American mutt – and when he opens up his mouth, he has that rarest of virtues, an actual honest-to-God voice, deep and mellow, distinctly American heartland without the nasal twang.

The breakout star of HBO's *Girls* (2012-) and the one cast member who seemed actually to come out of nowhere, Driver is now known to literally everyone in the world as Kylo Ren, the bad apple offspring of Princess Leia and Han Solo in the *Star Wars* universe. With that under his belt, Driver would be on firm financial footing if he never made another non-franchise movie, but he's kept on the grind, leveraging his fame to work with name-above-the-title directors, going from tiny character parts in Clint Eastwood's *J. Edgar* (2011) and Steven Spielberg's *Lincoln* (2012) to feature roles in new films by

Jeff Nichols, Jim Jarmusch, Martin Scorsese and, coming next year, Steven Soderbergh's return to feature filmmaking *Lucky Logan*.

In Jarmusch's *Paterson*, which has Driver as a New Jersey bus driver and lunch-hour poet, the actor's ability to convey harried decency is put to fine use. Driver has the unprepossessing air of the mannerly Midwesterner, and maybe this accounts for how he's snuck up on us with just how goddamn good he is – see Scorsese's forthcoming *Silence*, in which he appears physically transformed and with a Portuguese accent, never once lapsing into affectation or gimmick, in the role of a priest facing persecution in 17th-century Japan. At 32, Driver appears unusually in control of his craft and career, and spoke via phone with *Sight & Sound* about how he handles both.

Nick Pinkerton: In *Paterson* we see an old picture of you in Marine Corps regalia – it's the character, of course, but also reflects your own service in the Marines. Did you have the sense that it was important for Jim Jarmusch that you were someone, like *Paterson*, coming from a

IN THE DRIVING SEAT

The impressive roster of directors who have chosen to work with Adam Driver (opposite, in Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*) includes Clint Eastwood, Steven Spielberg, Noah Baumbach, Jeff Nichols and Martin Scorsese





 **working-class background, who understood those values instinctively?**

Adam Driver: I think he wanted someone from, maybe, a blue-collar background. I'm not sure that that really would've mattered in terms of casting... But the military thing – because I was in the military, he liked that idea, and wanted to address it with the picture, but not make it a huge factor in the plot. Throughout I think he was trying to subvert people's expectations, to make a point that you're not all one kind of thing – even though this guy is a working man from Paterson, New Jersey, he just happens to be a poet, too. And a bus driver, but he's not defined by that. He was in the military, but he's not defined by that – he's just a guy who happened to be in the military. Not to speak for Jim, but I think the point was to subvert expectations.

When I first read the script, the scene with the guys in the low-rider commenting on Paterson's dog came right at the beginning, and for the next 20 minutes I thought, "Those guys are gonna steal the dog." But that's not what it is. It's just two guys warning a guy that those kind of dogs get stolen. As far as my background or me being from Indiana, though, it never really came into the conversation.

NP: It's a really reaction-heavy performance.

AD: Yeah, that was one of the things I was most excited by. It's an antidote to heavy action, special effects movies. I'm surrounded by amazing actors – Golshifteh [Farahani] and William Jackson Harper and Method Man – and I get to show up to work and listen to them all day long. This was my favourite part. Jim trusts his audience, he doesn't feel like he has to dumb anything down. He trusts that watching someone think or process the world around them was cinematic enough, would be interesting enough to sustain a movie. For me, a lot of it was just listening to Golshifteh and not trying to put anything on top of what was there in the script. We had rehearsals before we started, and whenever we would add something, any time I did that, it seemed like the script didn't want it, that it made sense to just listen and respond and stay out of my own way.

NP: You can see these very conscious decisions being made about when to speak and when not to speak, and there's practically an entire plotline about household finances in which household finances are never actually spoken about.

AD: When the dog tears up Paterson's book of poetry, somebody at one of the screenings asked, "Why doesn't he lose it?" It's just Paterson's philosophy, he structures his life to be very routine, which allows him to do his thing on the side, do his art. He can kind of go on autopilot and drift away while he's driving, write in his mind. A lot of times he doesn't take action.

There's even a line in the movie, something like "Things are written on water", and that's kind of his philosophy. Things happen and you can't control them, and they just kind of go. The same thing with acting, where you're trying to find the moment, and then there was the moment, that was it, it happened and there's no way you can recreate it, because it will be a different thing. That's kind of where his mindset is.

NP: A real element of Zen. Did you have a reading list for the character, or was this stuff you were predisposed to be interested in?

AD: I had a very elementary education on poetry. I knew



In rehearsals, whenever we added something, it seemed like the script didn't want it, that it made sense to just listen and respond and stay out of my own way

e.e. cummings and [Allen Ginsberg's] *Howl*, but I didn't really know much other than that. I knew 'This is Just to Say' by William Carlos Williams, but I really didn't know much beyond that. So I read a lot of Ron Padgett and the New York School poets. But Jim is such a student of poetry, studied poetry at Columbia, it was a really great crash-course in those poets.

NP: And how did you prepare for the other aspect of Paterson's life, doing the rounds with the New Jersey Transit system?

AD: I got my commercial driver's license to drive the bus, which is a three-month process. I thought that would be helpful, because his daily routine is such a well-worked groove, and I wanted this action to feel very familiar, since we're trying to tell a story of years of someone's personal history in the space of a week, and I wanted that to be in my body so I wouldn't stress about it when we were shooting it. So I learned to drive a bus in Queens, New York – by the school they have a set route that you drive around to meet all these different traffic requirements. And that was kind of fun. The clothes by Catherine George were helpful, too, just the tactility of certain fabrics she was using.



LEAP OF FAITH
Following *Paterson*
(above, below) Adam Driver
will show his versatility in
Martin Scorsese's *Silence*
(below right), playing a Jesuit
priest facing persecution in
17th-century Japan

NP: How did your experience of Paterson, the city, line up with the idea of Paterson that comes over in the movie?

AD: Fred Elmes, who shot the movie, he really captured it, the juxtapositions you find there: run-down buildings and factory warehouses left over from when the soap trade was big in town, old statues, the unexpected list of people who come from there, this beautiful urban waterfall. Fred did it justice, and how the city and its contradictions is shown also complements the characters, who have all of these seemingly opposing qualities going on within them. The production designer, Mark Friedberg, is a genius, and you see how the exotic inside of the house is kind of at odds with the outside.

NP: A lot of what people seem to respond to in the movie is its sense of – not utopianism, really, but this idea of ‘beloved community’. I wonder how that was reflected in the atmosphere on the set?

AD: There was never any sense of preciousness, in terms of making everything feel ‘perfect’. Part of it may be the way that Fred Elmes makes anything he shoots beautiful. But there was never a sense of being precious, of being just so.

NP: Having seen *Silence* I know you can handle an accent just fine. How did you decide how ‘Jersey’ – or ‘Not Jersey’ you were going to play the part?

AD: It was very conscious to keep it closer to myself, and not to play up an accent. We went over that early in rehearsals.

NP: And what was the reasoning behind having you do a Portuguese accent in *Silence*? Because of course Scorsese had previously made a Biblical epic where everyone is talking like they’re on a corner in Bensonhurst.

AD: We could’ve put on stronger accents, but the idea was that these people are talking to each other in their native tongue, and there wouldn’t be a lot of mistakes in the English, so it should be as subtle as possible, to give a sense of where they’re from but not give the sense that they’re making mistakes in their grammar.

NP: You’re a pretty recognisable guy, and I didn’t recognise you when you first appeared in the movie – or I couldn’t be sure it was you. What was the motivation for the change?

AD: Marty asked us, Andrew Garfield and I, to lose weight, because at the start of the story, they’ve already been on a ship, having just landed after a two-year journey where we took off from Portugal, sailed around Africa, and landed in Macao, which is where we pick up with them. It’s been two years on a ship, starving, diseased, running

low on resources, patience, salt... And after this two-year odyssey to get to Japan, on the last step you have someone telling you, “No, you can’t do it.” It makes the stakes higher, and more desperate. Something about being well-fed and well-rested, it didn’t seem to be... helpful here.

NP: The dynamic between your character and Andrew Garfield’s in *Silence* is interesting – it seems like a big part of it is the juxtaposition of your doctrinaire rigidity with his character’s fluidity, his openness.

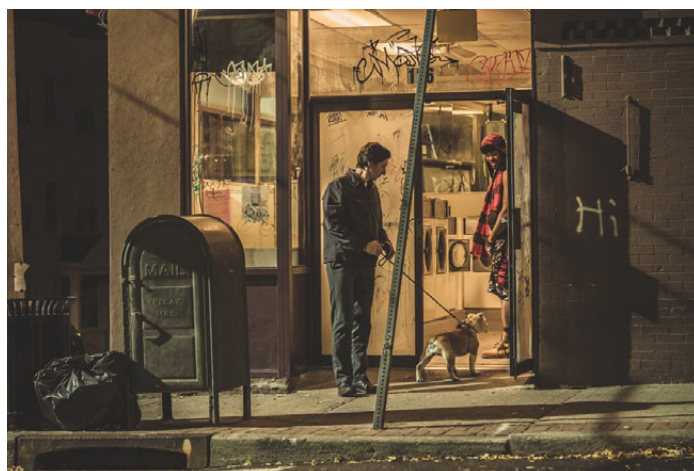
AD: We tried to spend as much time together as possible. We went to a Jesuit retreat in Wales, and tried to do as much homework as we could on Jesuit culture. The training is very intense and all-encompassing, and so we’re playing guys who would have been together basically from birth, kind of at the same point in their Jesuitical careers.

As far as their different philosophies, I viewed Garrpe, my character, as the Saint Peter of the story, just full of doubt the entire time. Something I relate to the most, actually. That’s the complicated thing about faith – not just in religion, but faith in anything. The immense doubt that goes along with what it is you’re doing, if it’s being in acting or anything that you’re passionate about, doubt inevitably guides decisions, and how you manage doubt is a big part of all of it. Some of us are more committed than others.

In the case of Andrew’s character, he seems in the beginning to be more devoted to the cause, but then his faith is called into question. Garrpe is almost coming from the opposite trajectory – he has his doubts from the very beginning, but he finally rises to the occasion.

NP: You’ve been working with an incredible string of directors. Is there a particular model that you have in mind, in terms of the kind of career that you’re working towards?

AD: I don’t have a set plan. I don’t think in terms of characters, like “I’ll play this kind of character, and then I’ll play this kind of character.” I just think of it in terms of directors. Film is a director’s medium. But I can want to work with really good directors all that I want – if I don’t get that opportunity, there’s nothing I can do about that. I’ve been lucky to have the opportunities to work with the people I’ve worked with. Once you get a taste for really good directors, like Jim or Soderbergh or Scorsese, who’s been a favourite since I was a kid – once you get that taste you just kind of want to only do that. And if you can, great. That’s my only game-plan: to work with great directors. That’s it. ☺



POETRY IN MOTION

With two new films, *'Paterson'* and *'Gimme Danger'*, released in UK cinemas this month, Jim Jarmusch discusses the echoes of Ozu in his work, his longstanding passion for Iggy Pop and why he hates zombies on mobile phones

By Geoff Andrew

At this year's Cannes Film Festival, Jim Jarmusch accomplished the rare feat of having two films premiere: *Gimme Danger*, his long-awaited and utterly disarming documentary about The Stooges, and *Paterson*, a wonderfully tender, delicate and funny fiction about a week in the life of Paterson, a verse-composing bus-driver who lives with his constantly enthusiastic, creatively aspirational partner Laura in Paterson, New Jersey, former home to William Carlos Williams, Allen Ginsberg and Lou Costello, among others. Not much happens in the way of plot: like the doc about Iggy et al, it's in part a reflection on creativity and – like all Jarmusch's work – a warm acknowledgement of the importance of love and friendship in this sad and beautiful world.

Knowing how trying an experience the Cannes media circus can be for Jarmusch, I spoke with him some months later over the phone, when I'd had the chance to watch and enjoy *Paterson* a second time.

Geoff Andrew: How did the idea for *Paterson* originate?

Jim Jarmusch: Well, 20 or 25 years ago I was reading a lot of William Carlos Williams, and decided to take a day-trip to Paterson; it's not far from New York. I saw the Passaic Falls, sat where Paterson in our film sits, and walked around the industrial buildings. I was starting to read the long poem 'Paterson' again – I don't understand a lot of it as it's quite metaphysical, and I usually prefer his shorter poems of observation – but the beginning is

so beautiful. It describes the rock formation of the Falls being like a man, and starts with a metaphor of Paterson itself being a man. And I made some notes about maybe making a film about a guy named Paterson who lives in Paterson: a working-class guy but also a poet. It was just a page of loose thoughts.

Over the years I revisited the idea now and then, but only got around to writing a script just before *Only Lovers Left Alive* [2013]. But then I made that film and began working on *Gimme Danger*. I should add that after my visit to Paterson I started reading a lot about its history, which is incredibly fascinating, complex and unusual. It was the first industrial utopian city envisioned by Alexander Hamilton, and indeed it did become a utopian city in the 19th century, using the Falls as a form of energy. It was a huge textile town and had a lot of union activity, strikes, anarchists and immigrants. Its story is really interesting.

GA: I'm intrigued that you wrote it just before *Only Lovers Left Alive*. Though the films are very different in many respects, they're both about creativity, the power of art and the importance of supportive relationships.

JJ: They are. I'm not good at analysing this,

While the film's no social document, we did try to be true to the city's ethnic diversity – and true to it visually, too

but on one level they're both love stories about accepting the person you love for who they are and allowing them to be that. Also, in neither film is there any real conflict between the couples who are the main characters; the films are not about things *not* working, but more about how things *do* work thanks to the characters' love and respect for each other.

GA: These last two features feel rather more personal than your earlier work. Do they have autobiographical elements?

JJ: People say that, but I'm confounded by them. All my films I consider like my children; they come out of me, along with some incredible collaborations. They're all personal to me.

GA: I understand that, but the last two films deal with people trying to have some sort of creative life, in the context of their supportive relationships. And *Paterson* writes poetry – something you yourself have done...

JJ: That's true. The earlier films were not about creative people; maybe these are on a different level. I don't know. People looking at *Paterson* and *Gimme Danger* have pointed out that they're completely different stylistically. Well, stylistically they are, but there are connections because Iggy Pop and The Stooges lived by their creative instincts. They lived that way according to their priorities, not to what the world expected of them, and that's similar to Paterson and Laura.

Also, The Stooges come from a working-class place and Paterson and Laura are working-class. That said, Paterson in the film is an imagined world. In reality, Paterson is a very rough place, with violence, gangs, problems, corruption. But there are also people there like Laura and Paterson. And while the film's no social document, we did try to be true to the city's ethnic diversity – and true to it visually, too.

GA: Let's talk about Paterson the man; he doesn't have a cell phone or email. You don't use email. He loves books, as you do; he goes to a bar with no TV. I'm not suggesting this is a self-portrait, but you presumably feel an affinity for him...

JJ: Well, it's true I don't use email, except occasionally through the office. And I share many of those feelings. I don't like going into a bar where there's always sports on TV. And I'm really fed up with what I call phone zombies, just walking along on their device so that you almost have to shove them out of the way and say, "Wake the fuck



On the buses: Adam Driver in *Paterson*, in which he plays a poetry-writing New Jersey bus driver



PHOTOGRAPHY BY SARA DRIVER

Jim Jarmusch: 'All my films I consider like my children; they come out of me, along with some incredible collaborations. They're all personal to me'

up! There's a world around you, and you're living in your little screen."

I live on the fifth floor and when I look down at the street at night, I see all these zombies carrying their little glowing devices as they stumble along. I should add that I'm not against technological advances: I shot my last two films digitally and think we made them look very beautiful. I prefer film, but I also understand that these tools have their own beauty, depending on how you work with them. And the internet is an incredible thing. It's just the way these tools can get used that I object to.

GA: In *Paterson* you show people with a sense of civic pride, of belonging somewhere: the bar with its wall of fame; kids on the bus discussing anarchists. People taking a real interest in where they live.

JJ: The city's so interesting, I couldn't keep those things out. A sense of place and history has always been interesting to me; that's what drew me to *Paterson* in the first place. So it finds its way into the film through the characters' appreciation or celebration. By the way, the Iggy Pop cross-referencing is real; he *was* voted sexiest man alive in 1970 by some girls from *Paterson*. I didn't make that up.

GA: When did you decide to use the poetry of Ron Padgett for *Paterson's* verse?

JJ: As soon as I turned my ideas into a script, I thought I'd ask Ron Padgett because I'm a kind of godson of the New York School of poets, and Ron's a wonderful example of what is sort of the second generation of that school: after Kenneth Koch, John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, James Schuyler come Ron Padgett, David Shapiro, Joe Brainard. Ron and I have been friends for maybe 15 years now. I love his poems so much; he was the perfect voice for *Paterson*. I didn't want a poet who was too heavy. I was very lucky that Ron not only gave me permission to use existing poems but also wrote some new poems for the film. The only one he didn't write is the one the little girl reads, which I wrote myself. Actually, I wanted Ron to write a better one, but he refused, saying the one I'd written was good enough. So I was stuck with mine!

GA: Did the choice of poems shape the narrative at all?

JJ: They did. For example 'Love Poem', which talks about Ohio Blue Tip matches, was an existing poem, so I had *Paterson* looking at Ohio Blue Tip matches in his home – in fact the boxes with that design don't exist any more, so our department had to create them. In other little ways here and there the poems led me to shape the script. But I write only one script; I don't revise, revise, revise during writing. But then, when we're getting locations, working with the production designer, with the actors, we revise things as we're shooting and editing. So the final draft



Poetic justice: Golshifteh Farahani as Laura and Adam Driver in *Paterson*

is the final cut. Even while writing I knew I wanted Ron's poems, but I didn't choose which ones until the script was complete.

GA: They work so well. For instance, the poem called 'The Run,' which talks about moving through trillions of molecules – you use that as *Paterson's* bus is moving through the streets.

JJ: That poem he wrote for the film. Of course, we had the poems when we were editing, so they influenced how we cut it.

GA: Identical twins keep showing up throughout the film, and *Paterson* keeps meeting other poets. It's as if there's a strange pattern to the events in the film, even though it's not clear what that pattern is. That almost echoes *Paterson*/*Padgett's* poem which suggests there might be an extra dimension beyond the third or fourth dimensions.

JJ: When I'm working on a film, all kinds of synchronistic things start to happen which wouldn't happen normally; it's because my awareness is heightened. So I wanted that to happen in the film itself. And I wanted it to be there *not* to satisfy audience expectations. So when Laura says she had a dream about twins, *Paterson* starts seeing twins everywhere – but in the end it's not like she's telling him she's pregnant. Or when the guys talk to him about his dog being jacked; they're not going to jack his dog, they're just commenting on what the world's like, reaching out to another human about how shit happens. These things, I wanted them *not* to pay off.

Actually, the thing with twins wasn't even in the script. When you're filming with children

I just wanted to make an antidote to all the violent, abusive, confrontational content we get in movies

there's a limited amount of time they can work each day. Fairly early on in the shoot, one woman brought along her daughter of eight, nine years – she was an extra on the bus. The next day I saw her switching that girl with an identical twin. She told me she did it because they couldn't both be off school. So I said, "Tomorrow I need you to bring both of them." Then I added the stuff about Laura's dream, and I started putting twins in... so much so that I ended up taking a few out. Things happen like that, and I like to follow them.

GA: The conversations *Paterson* hears on his bus are very true to life. Did you go listening to people on buses as research?

JJ: I wrote the one about anarchists and the one about [the boxer] Hurricane Carter because they were historical figures connected with *Paterson* I found fascinating. But the two guys talking about girls is almost verbatim from something I overheard in a luncheonette maybe 15 years ago; I basically wrote it down later and kept it in my head. It was two working-class guys – I couldn't see them as they were behind me – and it was priceless: everything was, "Oh, she was hot, I knew what she wanted, but I was tired, I hadn't showered, so I went home." They were total losers with females but had this sympathetic macho cover for it which I found heartbreaking. So that conversation I took from life.

GA: Can you tell me about casting Adam Driver and Golshifteh Farahani?

JJ: This was an odd film for me because I didn't write it with the actors in mind, as I usually do. I hadn't seen Adam in much. I saw him in *Frances Ha* [2012], and his brief role in *Inside Llewyn Davis* [2013]. I don't watch much TV, especially not things like *Girls* [2012-], but I saw part of one episode and

liked his face and presence. I read a couple of interviews that made me really drawn to him. So I met Adam and loved him. He's like me, doesn't approach things in an analytical way; he's very intuitive, reactive, quiet. Very humble, but with a good sense of humour bordering on goofiness that I appreciate. A wonderful actor and great to work with. He was in the Marines then went to Juilliard – that's unusual, what my Native American friends call going down the river with each foot in a different canoe. Just right for a film about a working-class guy who's a poet...

As for Golshifteh, I wrote the part of Laura for an American not ethnically defined in any way. But then I thought, first, that Paterson, after Michigan, has the largest proportion per capita of Middle Eastern people in the United States; and second, that Paterson the character had been in the military – even if you only know that from a briefly glimpsed photograph. We don't know anything about how they met. But [independent filmmaker] Sara Driver, who's always advising me, suggested Golshifteh Farahani for the part; I'd loved her in Bahman Ghobadi's *Half Moon* [2006]. I skyped with her, and it just seemed perfect. There's a lot of Golshifteh in Laura: she's radiant, full of energy, warm, intelligent and beautiful.

When she and Adam were talking about developing their characters, I just said, "Look, I just want to know Paterson and Laura from when the film begins with you waking up on the Monday morning. If you need a backstory, that's up to you, but don't tell me. I don't want to know anything about it."

GA: Paterson reminded me of some of Ozu's work. It's not social realism, but it's very truthful in other ways. Also it has a lovely calm, which emanates partly from Paterson himself, partly from the lovely colours and editing rhythms. Was a sense of serenity something you worked deliberately to achieve?

JJ: Certainly. I didn't go back to reference Ozu in any way, though it's not entirely unconscious because Ozu is so formatively involved in my thinking about what cinema can be, or how you construct something with camera position, and all the beautiful things one learns from Ozu about life and the world. All that's deeply ingrained in me, along with a lot of other people's work, too.

But I just wanted to make an antidote to all the violent, abusive, confrontational content we get in movies. I love all kinds of cinema: Okamoto Kihachi's *The Sword of Doom* [1966], which is nihilistically violent, is one of my favourite films. Or Cassavetes's films, which I love; they're full of emotional conflict. But just now I wanted to put a little balance on the other side of the scales. It's like Claire Denis's *35 Shots of Rum* [2008], which was similarly quiet, observational and domestic



Prime movers: Iggy Pop in Jim Jarmusch's documentary about The Stooges, *Gimme Danger*

in a way that was kind of a relief. In America, there's an apartheid, rape culture. But there are other sides to America, of course, which are reflected in William Carlos Williams, in the New York School poets, and in people who are bus drivers and hear a lot of things and have a lot of things floating through their consciousness that are quiet and not negative or dramatic. I wanted to make a quiet film.

GA: Turning to something louder: how did *Gimme Danger* come about, and why focus just on The Stooges years?

JJ: I've known Iggy – Jim Osterberg – for 20, 25 years. Maybe seven or eight years ago we were hanging out, and he said, "A lot of things are going to start in the next few years coming out about me and my life, some films and books. I can't control it all, but I know how much you love The Stooges, and if anyone made a film about The Stooges, man, I wish it would be you." It took me about two minutes to decide to do it. In fact, only the next day I started thinking about how I'd make the film. If it were about Iggy Pop it'd be 12 hours long, because he's done so many things. But no, this was celebrating The Stooges. They're important to me, with their Midwestern, post-industrial, working-class kind of rock. Very primitive yet very sophisticated; people don't really give them that credit. You know, they're listening to [experimental composer] Harry Partch...

GA: And John Cage as well as The Velvet Underground. Isn't there another affinity, in that you like Ozu but also old horror movies, Mahler's lieder as well as proto-punk?

JJ: Exactly, they're from the same kind of place, absorbing, by some kind of osmosis, avant-garde influences, from the ONCE festivals in Ann Arbor or wherever. Iggy told me recently that back then the fans

of The Stooges were either burn-out stoners – as you'd imagine – or avant intellectuals. Nobody in-between. I love that combination of revolutionary-sounding primitivism with a kind of sophisticated leaning towards the avant garde.

GA: Were you listening to The Stooges at the time?

JJ: Yeah, I discovered them at 16. I was also a big MC5 fan. At 15 I hitchhiked to Ann Arbor to see the MC5, but their show was cancelled. I couldn't tell my parents that I made this big bold move; I don't know if my mum knows even today. I went to Ann Arbor and hippies let me sleep in their house: a big adventure for a 15-year-old from Akron... Then the next year The Stooges' first album came out and it spoke to me. We listened to West Coast bands like Buffalo Springfield and Jefferson Airplane, and obviously British invasion stuff, but what really spoke to us, my small group of friends, were the MC5 and The Stooges – and the beautiful, enigmatic light from the East which was The Velvet.

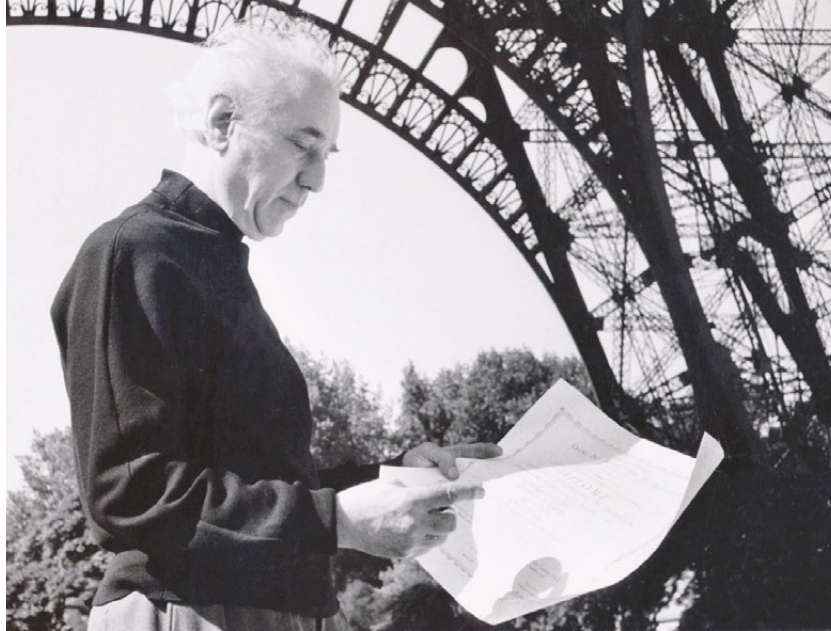
GA: Iggy is a great storyteller. It's amazing he survived so well and remembers so much.

JJ: His memory is incredible. A great example of ignoring hierarchy of artistic expression. He's reading De Tocqueville right now, listening to out-there jazz, checking all kinds of other stuff. He's one of those intellectuals who's not damaged by any kind of academic refinement. Super-intellectual but self-taught. As Mark Twain said, don't let school get in the way of your education. Iggy's still like that, not settled into anything. Still hungry in the most beautiful way. ☺

i Paterson is released in UK cinemas on 25 November and is reviewed on page 84. Gimme Danger is released on 18 November and is reviewed on page 73

The tale of the making of Abel Gance's extraordinary 1927 masterwork 'Napoleon' – and of the painstaking, decades-long efforts to reconstruct the film from surviving prints – displays some of the fearless single-mindedness and megalomaniac ambition of the emperor himself

By Paul Cuff



MILITARY PRECISION
Abel Gance (left) shot around 400,000m of film stock for *Napoleon* (opposite), providing 290 hours of material, from which he created a definitive cut of nine hours and 40 minutes

THE MAN OF DESTINY

Abel Gance's silent masterpiece *Napoleon* (1927) exceeds the parameters of virtually every aspect of film culture. In the 1920s, its temporal gigantism horrified producers and its aesthetic invention flustered critics; today, the film's dimensions pose monumental challenges for restoration and exhibition – let alone evaluation. *Napoleon* sealed Gance's reputation, yet its fate haunted the rest of his career. The film's production attracted extensive press coverage, as well as generating a mountain of documentation. Through this material, it is possible to follow the extraordinary efforts that went into its creation, and the problems that led to its destruction.

September 1923. Flushed with the critical and financial success of *J'accuse!* (1919) and *La Roue* (1922), Gance writes a proposal for a six-film series covering the life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Each episode is to contain 1,700 metres of celluloid – 75 minutes of screen time. Gance wants to take the commercial model of serial distribution and use his films to expand the artistic horizons of cinema.

November 1923. Gance contacts Napoleon's descendants to tell them he senses the "shadow of the Emperor" stirring in response to the genesis of his project. (He may also be hoping for money.) His film series shall be a form of "miracle" and Gance calls himself an "architect of the Resurrection". The pretenders to France's throne offer no reply to his letters.

January-February 1924. Émigré Russian businessman Vladimir Wengeroff persuades German industrialist Hugo Stinnes to join him to form Westi, a company that buys a 70 per cent stake in Gance's Napoleonic series.

March-July 1924. Gance creates the first of his six projected screenplays. He is permitted to work in Napoleon's rooms in the palace of Fontainebleau. In a preface addressed to his cast and crew, Gance writes that they must "reincarnate" history's population. The director demands absolute faith in their collective mission, which is nothing less than the spiritual resuscitation of the French Revolution. Visitors to Gance's candle-lit workroom have the impression that he is conducting a séance.

PHOTOPLAYPRODUCTIONS LTD (1) RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE (1)



May 1924. After courting backers from across Europe, the final 30 per cent of the production money is raised. Gance signs a contract with Westi to complete his first film by December 1924, and all six by March 1926.

August-September 1924. Gance is still hunting for a man to play Napoleon. His friend Albert Dieudonné is dieting on green beans to regain the body of a younger man. One evening he arrives in costume at Fontainebleau, where a stunned elderly attendant mistakes him for the Emperor's ghost. Marching inside, he recites one of Napoleon's speeches to an equally startled Gance. Dieudonné is given the role.

October-November 1924. Gance reworks the screenplay, which has grown to the size of a substantial novel. History "must have a *plot*", he notes in a margin.

January 1925. A month after the contracted completion deadline, the first scenes are filmed at Billancourt Studios in Paris. Cameras are attached to the chest of operators so they can walk; wheeled on tricycles so they can track, or on rails so they can slide down stairs; made to capture multiple scenes on the same strip of celluloid so that they seem to possess polyphonic vision. More cameras record the filming process. Gance encourages his actors with every means necessary: whispered instructions, mimed gestures, smiles, pistol shots.

February 1925. Gance receives a telegram: "SNOW HAS FALLEN." The production heads to Briançon to film Napoleon's school snow-fight. Cameras are hurled into action: attached to guillotines mounted on sleds so they can swoop; stuck on rotating tripods so they can turn 360 degrees.

April 1925. The production arrives in Corsica. A mayoral election is imminent in Ajaccio, where the past seems uncannily close to the present. One of Gance's extras turns out to be the grandson of a man who helped Napoleon evade arrest on Corsica in 1792. Many locals are acting as if Dieudonné is Napoleon. Officials in Ajaccio beg the actor not to wear his hat in public, lest he excites too many tempers. During filming, crowds still loyal to Corsica's most famous son refuse to shout "Death to Napoleon Bonaparte!" At the end of location shooting, the Bonapartist candidate is elected mayor of Ajaccio. Dieudonné is made an honorary citizen.

June 1925. While Gance is on Corsica, Stinnes dies. Westi withdraws support for *Napoleon*. The film piles up debts.

July-August 1925. Back in Paris, Gance is desperately looking for another backer. Somehow he persuades cast and crew to keep shooting. Behind the scenes, technicians from America and Germany help prepare special effects for the spectacular storm sequence. On set, Dieudonné stands in a small boat, flanked by four giant water chutes. Eight barrels stand at the top. The actor forlornly asks the crew to "make sure the water is warm". Gance wishes to overwhelm the audience as well as Dieudonné, so he mounts his camera on a gyroscopic tripod head to sway and swoop with the movement of waves.

December 1925. After a month of diplomacy, Société Générale des Films (SGF) agrees to support the completion of *Napoleon*. The film is saved but Gance must surrender control over its distribution. He agrees to produce a cut of no more than 3,000 by October 1926. He writes in his diary: "I have a sword of Damocles above my head. Now let's get to work!"

February-March 1926. At Billancourt, Gance is re-enacting the night-time climax of the Siege of Toulon in 1793. Many extras are from the nearby Renault factory, which is on strike. Conditions are realistically grim, but Gance inspires the cast. Rain is provided by the fire brigade, wind by aircraft propellers, gunfire by packs of magnesium. A box of ammunition catches light, triggering a huge explosion. Gance and eight others are engulfed by flames. The victims are rushed to hospital with severe burns. A week later – covered in bandages – the director resumes work.

March 1926. Gance is directing a scene in which a crowd is taught 'La Marseillaise'. He is observed exciting his extras into a state of frenzy by making them sing the national anthem 12 times "in crescendo". The critic Emile Vuillermoz thinks they are "possessed" and frets that Gance might use this wild mob to storm parliament and proclaim himself dictator. Another journalist calls the director a god-like magician presiding "over this birth of Christ". In live exhibition, a singer will synchronise his voice with that of Rouget de Lisle on screen – and Gance encourages theatres to distribute printed copies of 'La Marseillaise' so that the audience can join in.

April-May 1926. For the riot in the National Convention, Gance tells a reporter that he is going "to bring the Mediterranean into the studio". This scene is to be intercut with Napoleon at sea, forming a "Double Tempest". Cameras are mounted on huge pendulums to swoop over the heads of extras; Gance wants spectators to become "a wave in the ocean". Below, cameramen are stumbling in the seething crowd and dodging punches. Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer is on set, watching with alarm as the two parties of extras inflict blows that are more than just historically accurate. Several people are taken away on stretchers. Gance seems delighted.

July 1926. The population of La Garde in south-east France watches a column of troops march into town. One local presumes they have arrived to invade Italy and fight Mussolini. When informed the man in charge is not Marshal Foch but General Bonaparte, the man shrugs and mutters, "Bah, Parisians..." as he retires indoors.

August 1926. Gance is filming the last scenes of *Napoleon* in colour and in 3D, but he is more excited by an invention of his own design. Three cameras are mounted on top of one another – each covering one third of a massive panorama: a revolutionary concept that will require cinemas to install a screen three times the normal width together with three synchronised projectors.

September 1926. The production is over. Gance's assistant Jean Arroy is forced to face reality. He feels as though he has been "jettisoned in an alien century": modern Paris seems "dull" and "lugubrious" compared to the 1790s.

October 1926. SGF celebrates a deal with Gaumont-Métro-Goldwyn (GMG) to release *Napoleon* across Europe and America. Yet Gance has spent the budget for all six films without reaching the end of his first screenplay, and has already passed his second contracted completion date. He and his chief editor Marguerite Beaugé are in a studio overflowing with celluloid. *Napoleon* has consumed 400,000m of film stock, providing 290 hours of raw material. Their Herculean labour lasts day and night, week after week, month after month. Gance's retina is impaired for life. Beaugé has a nervous breakdown.



BLOWING IN THE WIND
Albert Dieudonné as Napoleon (above) in the 'Double Tempest' sequence, which intercuts a riot at the National Convention with a storm at sea; and Gance and his crew filming a snowball fight in Napoleon's youth in Briançon in the south-east of France (right)



PHOTOPLAY PRODUCTIONS LTD (3)





TRIPLE IMPACT

To capture the triptych sequences, Gance mounted three cameras on top of one another, so each covered one third of a massive panorama: a revolutionary concept that required cinemas to install a screen three times the usual width with three synchronised projectors



March 1927. Arthur Honegger and his assistant Arthur Hoérée are working at breakneck speed to prepare a score for *Napoleon*. Honegger writes a small amount of original music and supports it with work by other composers. As each section is assembled, they find they must start again because Gance keeps changing the editing. Honegger is furious and close to walking out.

March-April 1927. Gance screens preview prints of *Napoleon*. His closest friends are ecstatic but troubled. The film is a masterpiece, but of what kind? It is too long. There are too many details – too many incidents, too many subplots, too many images. Writers Albert t'Serstevens and Blaise Cendrars worry audiences will fail Gance's endurance test. Jean Arroy and art historian Elie Faure offer advice for cuts. Executives from GMG are horrified. How can they possibly release this sprawling epic?

April 1927. The premiere is set to take place at the Paris Opéra. Beaugé has not slept for a week. She and Gance have prepared a copy of 5,200m – a “short” edition of four hours, yet nearly twice the film's contracted length. The premiere is attended by a host of French celebrities, generals and politicians. The performance of Honegger's music is a disaster. Critics call it a cacophony. But the film receives a 15-minute standing ovation. The two triptych sequences – the ‘Double Tempest’ and ‘Entry into Italy’ – are a revelation. Vuillermoz describes being shown a “magical world” and experiences a sensation of “miraculous liberation”. Other reviewers report feelings of rapture and seasickness. Nine more screenings follow at the Opéra.

May 1927. Trade screenings of *Napoleon* at the Apollo in Paris. Gance has finished editing his definitive cut of 13,200m (but without triptychs). It lasts nine hours, 40 minutes and must be projected over several days. Witnesses say it has greater coherence than the Opéra cut, but complain anew of its defects. Film critics say *Napoleon* is bad history. Historians proclaim it a masterpiece.

June 1927. MGM's spectacular *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1925) has arrived in Paris and is being shown at the Cinéma Madeleine. This is the venue which had been reserved for *Napoleon*, but GMG has more invested in *Ben-Hur*. The latter breaks all records and remains at the Madeleine until October 1928.

October 1927. The German premiere of *Napoleon* in Berlin, where it is shown in a reduced version of three hours. Critics say Gance has “destroyed all the traditional forms of film”. *Napoleon* is distributed by UFA through more European territories, yet in France the film still has no general release.

November-December 1927. A revised print of the Opéra edition appears in Paris at the Marivaux theatre. A longer edition of *Napoleon* is prepared for release in provincial France, where it will be trimmed and reordered by exhibitors to fit their local requirements. Meanwhile, SGF ships a 9,600m print (and negative) of *Napoleon* to MGM for distribution in America.

January-February 1928. In California, MGM editors dismantle Gance's print and rewrite the intertitles. Horrified by the scale of work required, studio head Louis B. Mayer wires his New York office: “GOD HELP US”.

March 1928. Another edition of *Napoleon* is shown at the Gaumont-Palace. It lasts three hours, but it has been entirely recut by GMG without Gance's consent. Outraged, he takes his distributors to court.

June 1928. *Napoleon* premieres in the UK. The gala opening at London's Albert Hall has been cancelled, so the film appears without fanfare at the Tivoli theatre. This version is 3,500m, edited without Gance's approval. The triptych is shown on a single narrow “sheet” that is lowered in front of the regular screen. Viewers leave the cinema with “a migraine and a squint”.

August 1928. After protracted legal arguments, Gance is forced to abandon all control over the international distribution of *Napoleon*.

January 1929. *Napoleon* is shown in America in a version running to 2,400m, 100 minutes of screen time. It has been recut and systematically emasculated. Reviewers say the French should be ashamed to export so bad a film.

ARCHITECTS OF THE RESURRECTION

But the story doesn't end there. After the coming of sound, Gance reused sequences from his silent film alongside new material to form *Napoleon Bonaparte* (1935). In the 1950s, he returned to *Napoleon Bonaparte* and added the final triptych from 1927. A few years later, Gance imposed more new material on to his Napoleonic palimpsest to produce *Bonaparte and the Revolution* (1971). The result of this successive tampering was archival chaos. ‘Opéra’ and ‘Apollo’ negatives were irretrievably mixed, and surviving prints existed in various states of textual incompleteness or material erosion.

Into this situation stepped Kevin Brownlow, who began his project of reconstructing *Napoleon* in 1969. Working with – and sometimes without – the aid of the Cinémathèque française and the British Film Institute, he rebuilt Gance's film from innumerable fragments and proceeded to revitalise the art of live cinema. The following timeline cannot begin to do justice to the extraordinary scale of the work undertaken, or the complexity of the issues involved, but should suggest the significance of *Napoleon*'s commercial release this November.

August 1979. At Telluride, Colorado, Gance attends a screening of Brownlow's first major reconstruction of *Napoleon*. The director watches from his hotel window, standing during the final triptych sequence. Despite the lack of music and the piercing cold of the outdoor screening, the event is a revelation for its audience. Francis Ford Coppola plans to present *Napoleon* with live orchestra, under the auspices of his company American Zoetrope and Robert A. Harris's Images Film Archive. He commissions his father, Carmine Coppola, to write the music.

August 1980. The BFI and Thames Television agree to present *Napoleon* with orchestral accompaniment in the UK. Composer Carl Davis is given three-and-a-half months to write a score for the film, which then runs nearly five hours.

November 1980. *Napoleon* is shown with live orchestra at the Empire, Leicester Square, as part of the London Film Festival, prompting sensational reviews for Gance's film and Davis's score. Based on its success, Thames agrees sponsorship of a series of silent film restorations for live screenings and recorded broadcast.

March 1981. Radio City Music Hall, New York, hosts the US premiere of *Napoleon* with Carmine Coppola's score. To avoid crippling overtime bills, Brownlow's restoration must be reduced to less than four hours, in part by cutting material but mainly by showing the film at a faster speed. *Napoleon* is a triumph in New York





A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT
Kevin Brownlow, pictured with Abel Gance (below), began his restoration of *Napoleon* (above) in 1969, rebuilding the film from innumerable fragments

and elsewhere in the US, but Coppola's music is poorly received. Coppola and Harris acquire world rights outside France.

November 1981. Death of Gance.

November 1982. After collaborating with the Cinémathèque française to incorporate newly discovered material into *Napoleon*, the French premiere of Brownlow's now expanded restoration takes place in Le Havre with Davis conducting an extended version of his score.

July 1983. The Parisian premiere of Brownlow's restoration at the Palais des Congrès with Davis's music. Surviving members of Gance's cast take to the stage to receive an ovation. In the next decade, numerous live performances of *Napoleon* take place. (But the version distributed by Zoe-trope remains the one Coppola premiered in 1981.)

July 1989. *Napoleon* screens in Paris for the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Brownlow and Davis are each made a Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

April 1991. Death of Carmine Coppola.

August 1992. Using Brownlow's version as a template, the Cinémathèque française presents a revised edition of *Napoleon* by Bambi Ballard. Composer Marius Constant compiles a score based on the work of Honegger. There are two screenings at the Grande Arche de La Défense in Paris. French press reports imply the music puts audiences to sleep. (The event costs \$600,000.)

June 2000. The London premiere of a new version of Brownlow's restoration, produced as a collaboration be-

tween Photoplay Productions (Brownlow's company, in which he is partnered by Patrick Stanbury) and the BFI. Now five-and-a-half hours long, the source material is substantially improved, the title artwork remade in authentic design, and for the first time the print has original colour tinting and toning. Again Davis extends his score.

October 2001. The 2000 restoration is presented at Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Udine, Italy. American rights-holders are reluctant to grant permission because it will not feature Carmine Coppola's score, which they wish to extend to fit the 2000 restoration.

May 2004. Death of Constant.

December 2004. Two screenings of the 2000 restoration take place in London. American rights-holders threaten legal action, challenging the right to perform *Napoleon* in the UK.

May 2008. Press reports announce the resolution of the longstanding legal battle over the film's different editions.

March-April 2012. The San Francisco Silent Film Festival hosts the US premiere of Brownlow's 2000 restoration and Davis's score. (The total cost of these four performances is \$720,000.)

April 2012. The Cinémathèque française announces a new restoration of *Napoleon*, based on recently discovered material in their archives.

November 2013. The 2000 restoration of *Napoleon* is shown in London.

June 2014. *Napoleon* is shown in Amsterdam. The triptych is on a screen 40m wide.

February 2015. The Cinémathèque française announces its restoration of *Napoleon* will be released in 2017. Music will be by the late Carmine Coppola, arranged by Francis Ford Coppola. (The history of *Napoleon* in the Cinémathèque's press release mentions neither Brownlow nor Davis.)

January 2016. The BFI, in collaboration with Photoplay, announces a DVD/Blu-ray release, and theatrical distribution, of a new digital transfer of the 2000 restoration of *Napoleon*, complete with a recording of Davis's score. 6



The restored *Napoleon* will premiere on 6 November at London's Royal Festival Hall. It will be released in select UK cinemas from 11 November and on BFI Blu-ray and DVD, and BFI Player, on 21 November



"Delightful... a warm, thoughtful, surprising drama"

Dave Calhoun, Time Out



The Guardian



Time Out

"Marvellous... a great performance by Isabelle Huppert"

David Sexton, Evening Standard

"Mia Hansen-Løve and Isabelle Huppert prove
a dream partnership"

Guy Lodge, Variety



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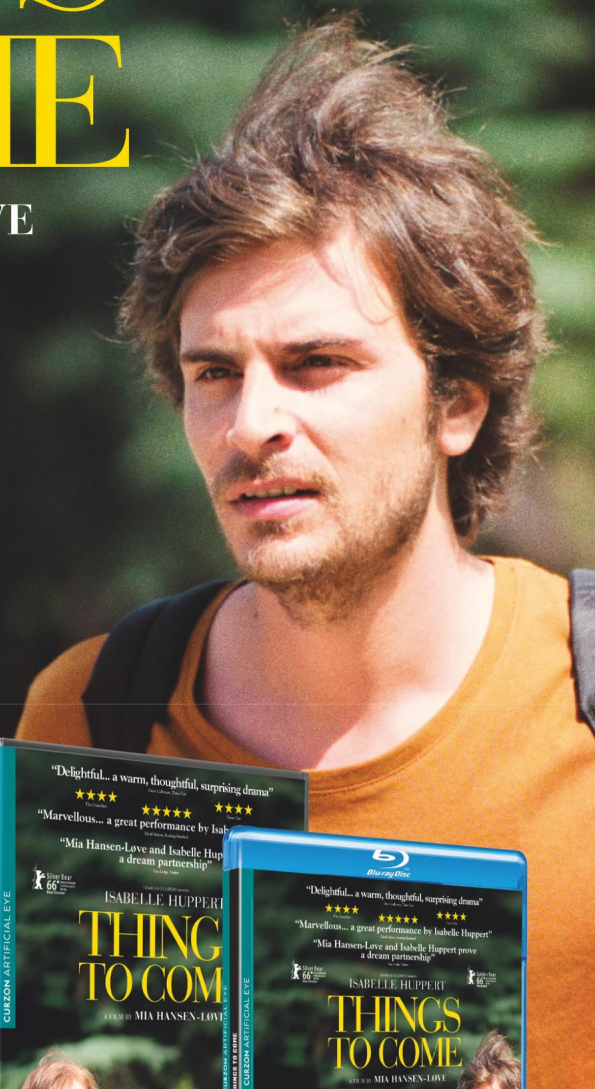
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IDENTIFICATION OF A WOMAN

Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne's beautifully crafted 'The Unknown Girl' borrows the structure of a classic detective story to tell the tale of a suburban doctor determined to uncover the identity of a young woman who is found dead near her surgery

By Nick James

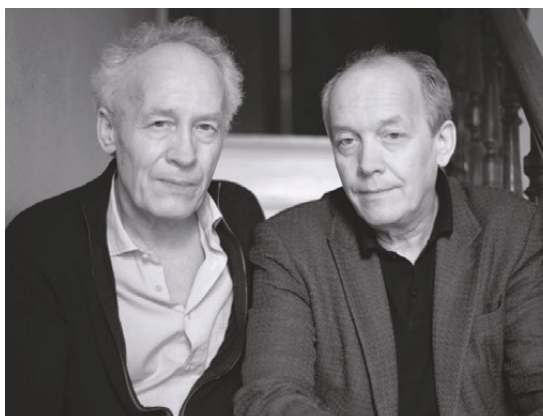
Can near-perfection become too familiar? That's the question provoked at this stage in the joint careers of co-directors Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne. Their new film *The Unknown Girl* is their first in 16 years not to win a prize at the Cannes Film Festival. The brothers tend to be described first as excellent craftsmen, producing impassioned, exquisitely constructed screenplays for equally fine films that have gritty social realist themes, characters and stories. *The Unknown Girl* has all of these things, yet audience over-familiarity with the Dardennes' work raises the bar for each new film, and the focus of this one is decidedly low-key: a female doctor with a very quiet, matter-of-fact bedside manner.

The brothers themselves, as you will see below, had some anxieties about the version shown at Cannes, and have re-edited the film, making more than 30 changes and losing about seven minutes. This new cut achieves the richness and power of their other films, albeit more stealthily. The Dardennes' films owe some of their impact to barely disguised genre elements. For instance, their extraordinary run of early Cannes successes, three back-to-back films that won the Palme d'Or and Best Actress (*Rosetta*, 1999), Best Actor (*The Son*, 2002) and the Palme d'Or again (*The Child*, 2005) can be seen, albeit obliquely, as a western, a revenge *noir* and a chase thriller, respectively.

The Unknown Girl follows suit in that, to some extent, it's a classic detective story. The interview below discusses the film's central dilemma in detail, so I'll just sketch an outline here. Jenny (Adèle Haenel) is a young local doctor (the equivalent of a GP in the UK), who, one evening, is so wrapped up in asserting her authority over intern Julien (Olivier Bonnaud) that she tells him to ignore someone buzzing at the downstairs door because it is more than an hour after the surgery's closing time. It's a double disaster: not only does she alienate Julien, turning him away from a medical career, but she afterward finds out that the person at the door was a young African woman in danger, who is later found murdered. Consumed by remorse, Jenny becomes a kind of solo investigator, determined to discover the woman's name. She visits the scene of the crime and starts to ask awkward questions. But it is in her local practice – which, before the murder, she had been planning to give up – that she becomes adept at gleaning information about the case.

Like all of the Dardennes' features, *The Unknown Girl* is set in Seraing, a depressed post-industrial suburb of Liège. The Dardennes have consistently focused their work on the poor and disadvantaged and, in particular, the fate of immigrants. *La Promesse* (1996), their break-

through feature, was about 15-year-old Igor (Jérémy Renier), whose lone parent Roger (Olivier Gourmet) rents out rooms to immigrants, including a woman from Burkina Faso whose future becomes Igor's responsibility. *Lorna's Silence* (2008) dramatised the dilemma of a young Romanian girl who enters into a sham marriage with a drug addict (Renier again) to gain Belgian citizenship. In some ways their most subtle film, *The Unknown Girl*, too, examines Europe's treatment of immigrants, as we shall see from the conversation I had with the brothers during this year's BFI London Film Festival.



Nick James: Can we start with why you chose to make a film about a doctor?

Jean-Pierre Dardenne: There was supposed to be a doctor in *The Kid with a Bike* [2011]. In the first version of the screenplay, the hairdresser was a doctor. But then we thought it was just too much, if she was already looking after people, that she was going to be looking after the young boy. But they meet [the hairdresser and the boy] in the doctor's waiting room. We continued to be obsessed with this doctor character, so we carried on working on it: someone who keeps death at bay, who protects life, who takes care of people. And in order to give birth to this character, we made her feel guilty about not opening the door to this young woman who will eventually end up dead.

NJ: It becomes almost like a religious story because the result of her feeling guilty is that she chooses to stay working with the poor. So you have this tension between the science of medicine and the emotion of guilt. Was that a way you were thinking about it?

Luc Dardenne: There's a story that an expert on ancient Greece told regarding a door that doesn't get opened. She was saying that, in Greek antiquity, when someone knocked at the door, one had to open it because, even

DOCTOR AT SEA Adèle Haenel (above) plays Jenny, a doctor at a surgery in Seraing, a depressed post-industrial suburb of Liège, in *The Unknown Girl* by Luc and Jean-Pierre Dardenne (above left)





though it might be someone very ugly or poor or smelly, a god might be hiding in this character. What she meant is that a human being is always indebted to others, and that evil resides in not feeling this debt. Our doctor, Jenny, at a certain point, was not feeling indebted to anyone, and then she got thrown into this feeling of debt, of guilt.

NJ: I watched your new cut of the film and it struck me more forcibly this time that you present Jenny in quite a negative light at the start. She is almost bullying the intern.

LD: Yes, she uses a lot of authority over the intern. Your emotions overcome your tiredness, and she admits to the intern afterwards that she did it out of a feeling of superiority and confesses that that was why she stopped him from opening the door. She wanted to open it, but her pride took over. And as the film develops she will discover that that was what she always wanted: to be working in this suburban doctor's office looking after people.

NJ: One of the difficulties you give yourself here is that you tell us so little about her life outside of being a doctor. I can see that you might want to make a feminist point, because women are so often judged in the context of the domestic, but did you mean to show that this is her sole vocation?

JPD: At the beginning of this film we see her giving up

on a career that's opening up in front of her, because she wants to find out the name of this young woman, but then she has an intuition that in order to discover her name she needs to stay within this doctor's practice.

LD: When we spoke about Doctor Jenny, we always had a woman in mind and we also always thought of a woman for the victim. As we were writing, we realised more and more that the film was about violence perpetrated towards women. Jenny will meet three men who will all be quite violent with her. I'm not saying that that's the reason we chose a woman, but that's what developed and I don't think we would have hit on those particular scenes if the doctor had been a man. It's true that we chose not to give Jenny any other life than that of a doctor obsessed with one incident. It seemed to us as though there wasn't any space for anything else.

NJ: I wondered if there was ever a longer version, because one of the things I felt was that what happened to her, and the guilt she felt, might have been triggered by something further back in her life.

LD: That was not what we were trying to do. We wanted her to feel entrapped very quickly in this feeling of guilt, possessed by this unknown woman. When





There's a lot of silence in the film. And these silent moments are when we're all – the doctor, the patients and the audience – thinking of the girl

she sees the picture of the girl on the computer, there's a silence and we see the girl looking out at her. And then we find Jenny in the car, still in silence. There's a lot of silence in the film. When she's working, these moments are there because we are waiting for the truth to come from the patients who knew her. We were hoping that during these moments of silence, Jenny, in her own head, would be communicating with people. And these silent moments are when we're all – the doctor, the patients and the audience – thinking of the girl.

NJ: You break that silence with the mobile phone a lot. It's almost like it's another character.

JPD: It's a rhyme of the doorbell, a reminder and variation on that theme. But I just want to add something regarding the girl's past. At the beginning, we were talking about a doctor who was older and we needed to construct some form of intrigue around her. We had elaborated a more complex life for her – she had failed at some point – but we weren't able to develop the story that way. We decided to choose someone younger. The face of Adèle Haenel triggered something in us: the innocence of her face. It is the innocence and determination of this youth that carries the whole thing and you don't need the past.

LD: We did try to construct a private life for her and put it in conflict with her mission. We tried three different scenarios, but we felt as though we were repeating things that have already been said several times in literature and cinema. We felt she didn't need to compensate for something she might have lived through. She was called by the girl, she didn't respond and that's enough.

NJ: Did the film present any new challenges for you?

JPD: There was a bet that we set ourselves. Her looking for the girl's name was going to happen through her medical practice. But we wanted to show her working at the same time. The incidents of violence that we had to find between her working in the practice and her seeking the name, that took some time. In the end, in the second version, one of the main differences from the version we showed in Cannes was that we brought it back into her mind, so that the audience is closer to Jenny.

NJ: I want to ask about the way you use the small details in your films. For example, when she goes to see the old doctor, who is ill, she's got her coat on, and he says, "Why are you wearing your coat, it's warm in here?" How does that sort of moment come about?

LD: We had not, of course, imagined the coat in the sce-

nario, but it's as though this coat, the colours in which we wrap her, is almost blocking her into her guilt and she doesn't even feel that it's hot.

NJ: The fact that she's quiet all the time – did that come from Adèle at first? Was it something you encouraged?

JPD: It was during rehearsals. We rehearsed for five weeks. Do you mean not loud?

NJ: I mean not loud, but she's also professionally expressionless – the bedside manner. She's not someone who shouts, ever.

JPD: We start off the film with her listening [through a stethoscope] and it seemed to us that she was a listening sort of character. She's not someone who takes up other people's space. She waits for people to speak to her. And it's only because she leaves them the space and the time to express themselves that they do speak. We also wanted to show that as well as this reserve, she also has patience towards her patients. She's attentive and she reassures.

NJ: Did you do any research into African women in prostitution?

LD: No, we didn't do any research; we know about it. We have a few people who give us information, with the police etc, on drugs and prostitution and then we observe. And we know how things happen. The young girl is a minor and that's why she doesn't have her documents. That's why the guy she works for doesn't want her to be carrying documents.

NJ: You bring documentation into the film a number of times. Identity, rights etc – and you know what's happened here in the UK – so you're tapping into the fact that Europe is deeply troubled about globalisation.

JPD: Even if that isn't at the forefront of what we wanted to express, it's a question of a door that doesn't get opened. The young girl is black, she gets found dead, without papers, beside water, so it resonates with all the questions of immigration and all the people who die in these circumstances.

What Doctor Jenny refused with this girl was the right to hospitality. The right to hospitality doesn't mean that all migrants can come and live in Europe. But it seems to us that in France and in Belgium, even if there isn't enough work for all these people, why would you amalgamate that idea with stopping ourselves from saving them at sea or looking after them in some way? It feels as though there's a kind of folding up, as though we are curling up on ourselves.

NJ: That's the big picture, but on a smaller level you're creating scenes of closeness between people that are not about love, or not about sexual love. There's information exchanged, genuine affection, physical intimacy – not the usual story.

LD: That's true, but going back to your question about the absence of her private life outside the surgery, it is as though we asked what is lacking for the spectator, and the spectator says, she doesn't have a life of her own, and it's true. And that's what we wanted to show, that she didn't have a life of her own.

JPD: She does have a rapport with her intern Julienne. And even if she doesn't see him very much, she thinks about his welfare and there's a kind of friendship that grows. 



The Unknown Girl is released in UK cinemas on 2 December and is reviewed on page 90

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In *The Unknown Girl*, the doctor, Jenny, is determined to discover the dead woman's name, but after some preliminary investigations decides that the answer to her identity must lie within her surgery



"Embrace of the Serpent is The Type Of Film We're Always Searching For"

JORDAN HOFFMAN - THE GUARDIAN



"Majestic"

THE LIST



"I was utterly mesmerised,
captivated and transported"

MARK KERMODE - THE OBSERVER



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WHAT LIES BENEATH

The diverse genre experiments of Japanese director Kurosawa Kiyoshi share a fascination with the dark, invisible forces at work beneath the surface of things – an obsession he revisits in ‘Creepy’, the disturbing tale of a suburban couple and their eccentric new neighbour

By Jasper Sharp

“You tear into people’s emotions like dissecting a lab rat,” snaps one of the key witnesses in an unsolved missing family case as she is subjected to increasingly forceful questioning by Takakura, a police investigator-turned-criminology lecturer whose extracurricular investigations shape the plot of director Kurosawa Kiyoshi’s aptly named *Creepy*. The line would also stand as an appropriate description of Kurosawa’s own *modus operandi*. His films get under the viewer’s skin with an almost clinical precision, maintaining a tightly controlled visual style composed of masterfully orchestrated long takes courtesy of his regular cinematographer Akiko Ashizawa. Combining an unsettling attention to detail with rug-pulling reveals, they unveil the mundane face of evil hiding in plain sight.

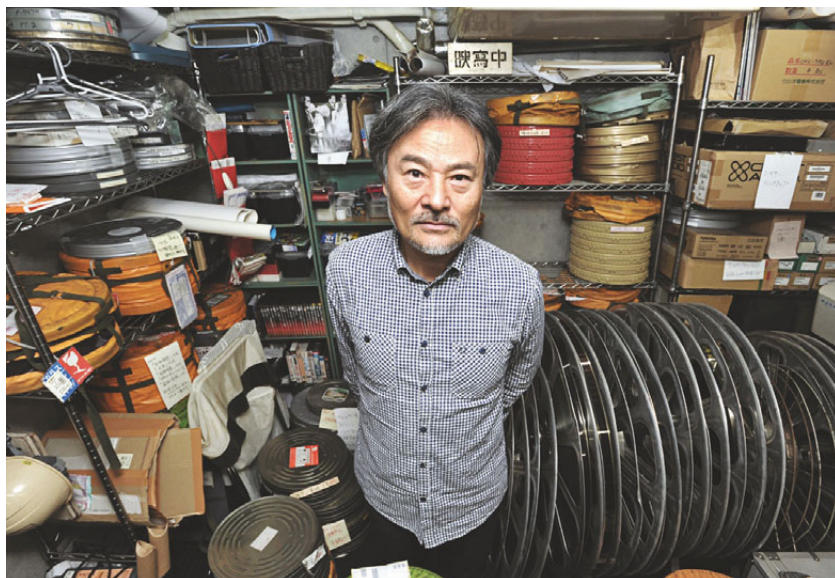
Creepy is the second Kurosawa title to receive a release in the UK this year following his intriguing though not entirely satisfactory supernatural romance *Journey to the Shore* – and shortly after his first non-Japanese feature, the French-set *Daguerreotype* (aka *The Woman in the Silver Plate*) premiered at this year’s Toronto International Film Festival. *Creepy* provides a welcome return to the taut blend of psychological thriller, police procedural and domestic chamber piece that marked his bona fide masterpiece *Cure* (1997). Both feature amnesic suspects, appropriated identities and murders by proxy, concealing a motiveless compulsion for destruction that spreads like a virus beneath the stillness of surface normality.

Both are lent a heartfelt dimension through the marital relationships underpinning their narratives. Takakura’s unofficial enquiries lead him ever further from the pristine suburbs he has moved to with his wife Yasuko after quitting the force following an incident that resulted in the death of an innocent bystander. Mysteriously cold-shouldered by the other residents, Yasuko is at first unnerved by their oddball neighbour Nishino, but slowly finds herself warming to his erratic gestures of friendship. His own wife, he tells her, is housebound with crippling depression, echoing the plight of detective Takabe’s spouse in *Cure* who, left abandoned in their inner city condo as his investigations take him on his own solitary journey into the darker reaches of the human psyche, lapses into a catatonic depression.

While highly regarded in cineaste circles in his homeland, Kurosawa’s individual approach to genre seems to have proved a little too abstruse for him to have ridden the international waves of the post-millennial J-horror boom that followed Nakata Hideo’s *Ring* (1997). His narratives unravel steadily according to their own logic, introducing scenes and characters whose relevance isn’t immediately apparent while meandering off on unexpected tangents and skipping the conventional plot beats of Hollywood storytelling.

Such flawed but fascinating films as *Doppelganger* (2003), *Loft* (2005) and *Real* (2013) have barely made it beyond the specialist festival circuit. ➡

TOUCH OF EVIL
(Opposite from left)
Kagawa Teruyuki, Nishijima
Hidetoshi and Takeuchi
Yuko in *Creepy*, directed by
Kurosawa Kiyoshi (right)



PHOTOGRAPH BY YOSHIAKI MURATA/THE JAPAN TIMES



Even more curious is how, despite an American theatrical run in 2001, *Cure* remains unavailable on home-viewing formats in the UK, while the more high-concept though equally esoteric *Pulse* (*Kairo*, 2001), in which a mysterious wave of suicides is linked to shadowy figures in the dark mirror universe of the internet, receives its belated premiere over here with Arrow's dual-format release in December. This is some 15 years after screening in the Un Certain Regard section at Cannes and ten years after the release of the Wes Craven-scripted US remake directed by Jim Sonzero (which itself spawned two sequels in 2008 written and directed by Joel Soisson, *Pulse 2: Afterlife* and *Pulse 3: Invasion*).

For a director who forged his reputation on such genre pieces, it may seem somewhat perverse that Kurosawa's first two films to see the light in the UK – *Bright Future* (2002; released on DVD in 2007) and *Tokyo Sonata* (2008) – might best be described as 'arthouse', a catch-all category to which so much Japanese cinema is consigned overseas. The former is an unorthodox tale of disaffected youth, in which Odagiri Jo and Asano Tadanobu play part-time workers at a laundry who murder their boss; the latter a stark portrait of a white-collar corporate drone, played by a suitably hangdog Kagawa Teruyuki (the neighbour in *Creepy*), stripped overnight of his livelihood and way of life when his department is outsourced to China. Unable to adapt, he continues to don his salaryman suit every morning and spends his former office hours roaming the streets, too proud to reveal his new reality to his family. Adapted from an original script by the Australian filmmaker Max Mannix, the film won the Un Certain Regard Jury Prize at Cannes in 2008.

What links these works with Kurosawa's horror films is the discomfiting articulation of the schism between the material reality of the modern city and the abstract forces that exert their influence over its inhabitants. An all-pervading aura of social entropy suffuses much of Kurosawa's *oeuvre*. Scenes often unfold against the anonymous backdrops of once thriving areas, the decaying husks of abandoned buildings awaiting demolition, having outlived their original utilitarian function, fixed on film to present a bleak vision of a future foreshadowed by the depersonalised purgatory of the present.

The very idea of genre is constantly interrogated and reformulated throughout Kurosawa's work, stripped down to its most basic components to be rebuilt from scratch. It's a process best epitomised by one of his most oblique films, *Charisma* (1999), a perplexing eco-fable detailing the conflicts around a tree that may or may not be killing off the rest of the forest in which it stands. As Kurosawa explained to Tom Mes in an interview for the website *Midnight Eye* in 2001, "It certainly is a detective story, but it's also a sort of American-style Indiana Jones/two-teams-ying-for-a-treasure film. That's how I started it. But instead of a box of treasure I decided to make the treasure a tree that's in a forest. Then you start to imagine 'what value does the tree have' and 'what is the condition of the forest it's growing in?' Then you start to realise that you're not making an Indiana Jones movie at all, but a much more complex film. The reason I take this approach to filmmaking is, although film needs a fictional story element, it also is a medium that allows you to record the reality around you. You're filming real forests and real people. Film for me is a medium point



IN COLD BLOOD
Like *Creepy*, Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Cure* (above, 1997) features amnesic suspects, appropriated identities and murders by proxy, concealing a compulsion for destruction that spreads like a virus beneath the surface of normality

between a fictional story and reality. You start with the genre, which is fiction, and gradually move towards reality. Somewhere in between you find film."

Kurosawa's pragmatic approach – constructing cinematic narratives within the available means and market possibilities – has its roots in his early work in Japan's microbudget independent scene, known as *jishu eiga* (literally 'do-it-yourself films'). The scene gained ground in the late 1970s, following the establishment in 1977 by the Japanese listings magazine *PIA* of a festival dedicated to the discovery and development of aspiring young filmmakers at a time when the stagnating studio system offered few opportunities.

Born in 1955, Kurosawa emerged as one of the leading lights of this burgeoning underground movement, alongside other notable trailblazers, including Ishii Sogo and Morita Yoshimitsu, who would use this platform as an entry point into commercial filmmaking. Kurosawa cut his teeth while studying at Tokyo's Rikkyo University under the influential film and literary critic Hasumi Shigehiko, making early 8mm shorts such as *Teacher of Violence: Massacre in Broad Daylight* (1975) and his campus-set gangster parody *Vertigo College* (1980), which screened at the 4th *PIA* Film Festival.

IN THE PINK

His first steps into a professional career came through the *pinku eiga* (pink film) sector – erotic films with narratives shot on 35mm and intended for distribution in specialised chains of adult cinemas. Taking as read the edict that as long as he stayed within the tight budgetary constraints of the pink film and included the required amount of sex or nude scenes, a director could generally get away with more or less anything, he made his debut feature, *Kandagawa Pervert Wars* (*Kandagawa inran senso*, 1983), which can be considered less perverted than willfully perverse. Its basic plot involves a young woman who, believing she is witness to scenes of incestuous abuse between a mother and her teenage son in the tenement block across the Kanda river which she keeps under close observation by telescope, makes the long trek to the other side to rescue him. Liberally peppered with film-buff in-jokes, the film comes across like a Brechtian hotchpotch of Godard and Hitchcock, and

Kurosawa's brand of shivers lies in the horror of alienation, of the loss of identity, of staring into the face of a loved one and seeing a stranger – not in short sharp shocks

clearly wasn't what the distributor Million Film had in mind. Nevertheless, the company offered him a second shot and set him to work scripting and directing a project to be released under the pre-decided title of *College Girl: Shameful Seminar*. When they saw what he turned in, his employers decided that this time Kurosawa had gone too far – or possibly not far enough. Giving the excuse that the resulting film was not remotely racy, Million shelved it. Kurosawa bought back the footage and re-edited it under his own steam as a mainstream, albeit fairly goofy, youth rebellion movie set in a girl's high school, released in 1985 as *The Excitement of the Do-Re-Mi-Fa Girl*.

Such false starts typified Kurosawa's early career, during which he supported himself by teaching film at Rikkyo (he still teaches at Tokyo University of the Arts). Four years later opportunity came knocking once more in the guise of the actor-producer Itami Juzo (best known as the director of the 1985 foodie comedy *Tampopo*), who had appeared as one of the teachers in *The Excitement of the Do-Re-Mi-Fa Girl*. Itami hired the down-on-his-luck director to make the haunted house horror *Sweet Home* (1989), with the relatively generous budget even stretching to flying special-effects maestro Dick Smith over from Hollywood. The film proved the box-office hit that both director and producer had wished for, but the relationship turned sour when Itami reshot and re-edited a number of sequences for the subsequent TV and video versions without its nominal director's knowledge, and Kurosawa sued, in the process cementing his reputation as something of a troublemaker.

Following his low-budget slasher *The Guard from Underground* (*Jigoku no keibin*, 1992), Kurosawa weathered a particularly dismal phase in the fortunes of the Japanese film industry by turning to the small screen. He worked on television, including episodes for Kansai TV's 1994 series *Haunted School* (*Gakko no kaidan*), music promos and a string of gangster comedies and action movies with such inauspicious titles as *Yakuza Taxi* (1994) and *Men of Rage* (*Otokotachi no gekijo*, 1994), shot on 16mm film but released through the flourishing V-Cinema straight-to-video market. It proved a liberating experience, affording him a grace period of several years, which he would spend refining the draft script that would eventually become *Charisma* (for which he'd been invited to the United States to participate in the Sundance Institute screenplay workshop), while honing an ability to work quickly, efficiently and inventively on limited budgets and tight shooting schedules.

The individual entries in the six-film yakuza series *Suit Yourself or Shoot Yourself!* (*Katte ni shiyagare!!*, 1995-96) and

the two-part *The Revenge* (1997) saw Kurosawa explore the potential of stylistic experimentation within a field in which audience expectations were generally set low. Kurosawa's stint in V-Cinema culminated in the diptych of *Serpent's Path* and *Eyes of the Spider* (both 1998), shot back to back in just two weeks with the same cast and crew – two radically different takes on the same basic plot of a white-collar worker drawn into a criminal underworld following the murder of a child. Intended to go straight to video, both were blown up from super 16mm for theatrical release following the significant success of *Cure*, the film that would mark Kurosawa's arrival as a force to be reckoned with.

Produced by the newly resuscitated Daiei Studios, a former major that had filed for bankruptcy in 1971, *Cure* presented an elliptical portrait of a detective haunted by his inner demons as he investigates a spree of random homicides. It was bolstered by an award-winning performance by Yakusho Koji, then riding high following his lead roles in Daiei's major hit from the previous year, *Shall We Dance?* (Suo Masayuki, 1996), and Imamura Shohei's Palme d'Or winner *The Eel* (1997). He would go on to appear in a number of Kurosawa's films, including *Doppelganger*, *Retribution* (2006) and *Tokyo Sonata*. Voted fifth-best domestic title of the year by critics from the prestigious *Kinema Junpo* magazine and released in a number of overseas territories, *Cure* saw Kurosawa hailed as a luminary in the field of horror, a status reinforced by his theoretical writing and the publication in Japan of such books as *Kurosawa Kiyoshi's History of Horror Films* (2003), co-authored with his filmmaker-critic friend Shinzaki Makoto, and novelisations of *Cure* and *Pulse*.

Despite a clear love of the genre, however, pigeonholing Kurosawa purely as a horror director would be misleading, as his immediate follow-ups to *Cure* – *License to Live* (1999), about a young man attempting to piece together his life after waking from a ten-year coma, and *Charisma* – were rather less easy to categorise, as was *Barren Illusion* (1999), an experimental portrait of urban youth made in conjunction with students from the Film School of Tokyo. But then Kurosawa's brand of shivers lies in the horror of alienation, of the loss of identity and control, of staring into the face of a loved one and seeing a complete stranger, not in short sharp shocks or the threat of physical harm – not that *Creepy*, meticulously reconstructed from the same base elements as his breakthrough, lacks any of these things. ☹

i *Creepy* is released in UK cinemas on 25 November and is reviewed on page 67. *Pulse* is released on Blu-ray and DVD from Arrow Films in December

FREE STYLE

Despite his love of the genre, it would be wrong to pigeonhole Kurosawa simply as a horror director, as can be seen by (below from left) his eco-fable *Charisma* (1999), black comedy *Doppelganger* (2003) and haunting drama *Tokyo Sonata* (2008)



TRADING PLACES

Shinkai Makoto's 'Your Name', a time-bending teenage body-swap romance, confirms his status as Japanese anime's big new thing. Here he talks about provincial sky-gazing, adolescent heartache and animating Tokyo for posterity

By Nick Bradshaw

The 43-year-old anime director Shinkai Makoto has been hyped as an heir to the mantle of Miyazaki Hayao, and there are some valid, if limited, points of comparison. He makes ravishing images, inspired by Miyazaki's signature contrast of bold, flat foreground characters with mottled, fine-detailed backdrops – though where Miyazaki relied on Oga Kazuo for his background art, Shinkai styles his own, while trying out different character designers across his films to date. Both attend to the weather, though where Miyazaki typically uses clouds, steam and wind to indicate nature's spirit world, Shinkai deploys a broader range of meteorological effects – rain, gentle snow, meteor fireworks – for emotional spectacle. And where Miyazaki (prior to *The Wind Rises* in 2014) expressed his formidable worldview through breathtaking fables and fantasias ostensibly aimed at various ages of children, Shinkai's wistful, bashful stories of the heart have tended towards a young adult register, with high-school student protagonists exploring their autonomy and graduating through first loves into the bruised, compromised culture of adulthood. But the fact that Shinkai's new feature, *Your Name*, has become the first anime to gross as much as some of Miyazaki's hits at the Japanese box office (overtaking *Ponyo's* ¥15.5 billion at the time of writing) suggests that both have found the knack of expanding their reach beyond their target audiences.

Rather like Wong Kar Wai, Shinkai focuses on the distances between people, in films such as *5 Centimetres per Second* (2007), a bluesy triptych about a young dreamer's not-quite relationships with two girls, or *The Garden of Words* (2013), about an earnest pupil's rainy-season trysts with an alcoholic young woman outside school. *Your Name*, though, moves into a poppier gear, starting with the soundtrack: instead of being composed by Shinkai's long-time collaborator Tenmon, or Kashiwa Daisuke, who scored *The Garden of Words*, this one is by the major-league Japanese rock band Radwimps; as Shinkai says, it adds "speed and fresh air". (The partnership between Miyazaki and the composer Joe Hisaishi has become such a paradigm for anime that Shinkai sought to break new ground: "I wanted something new, and not necessarily traditional to Japanese animation filmmaking," he says.) The story also moves faster: it's a time-travelling body-swap comedy drama about two high-schoolers, a country girl and a city boy, separated by not only distance but also the impact of a spectacular meteor shower from a passing comet, an animated spectacle that forms the linchpin of the plot and to which the film loops back twice.

Mitsuha, the girl character, lives in the fictional town of Itomori, set around the bay of a lake high in the Japanese Alps. Here, ritual and tradition are embodied by



DOUBLE JEOPARDY
The body-swapping Taki and Mitsuha in the wildly popular *Your Name*, directed by Shinkai Makoto (above right)

her grandma and the *kuchikami* (spit-fermented) sake they still ceremonially make – almost as great an embarrassment to Mitsuha as the public admonishments she receives from her half-estranged father, the mayor. It's perhaps her wish to escape to the big city that finds her waking up one day in the body of Tokyo high-school student Taki, and he in hers – and over the next weeks the hiccup becomes a habit. "You weren't yourself yesterday," runs the refrain from their friends and family; bewilderment and horror gradually give way to mischief and adventure as they explore each another's lives and trade notes in their phone journals. Mitsuha spends Taki's money in elegant Tokyo cafes and uses her feminine touch to sweeten his relationship with Miss Okudera, a beautiful co-worker at the high-end Italian restaurant where he works evenings as a waiter. Taki also gets to learn more about girls – a regular gag has him starting his days as Mitsuha by copping a feel of her breasts – and to explore the scenery and traditions of a more traditional Japan: Mitsuha's grandma takes him on an excursion to an ancient shrine in an overgrown volcano crater and explains to him the local concept of *kumihimo* – braided cords that represent the thread of time and the connections between people – and *kataware-doki*, a kind of half-world, in-between state. And when the cord between him and Mitsuha breaks, it's Taki who has to find his way back to Itomori and through that half-world, in search of his soulmate.



Shinkai himself grew up in Nagano prefecture, high in the Japanese Alps, before he moved to Tokyo, and agrees that he's seen both sides of the coin. "Mitsuha is pretty much me," he says. "Itomori doesn't exist, but definitely her character is based on my own upbringing. I loved Nagano but I really was dying to go to Tokyo. My parents used to run a construction company, so there was a pressure on me to take over the business eventually, but I wanted to do something different, and I left home at 18."

When I suggest that the film dwells more on the details of contemporary young urban experience (for example, incorporating smartphone messages in its *mise en scène* more comfortably than just about any film I've seen), he pulls me up: "I'm not actually documenting the current Tokyo. The Tokyo you see in this movie is a stereotype, the image that Mitsuha dreams of and that I dreamt of when I was younger: that was Tokyo to me. And in reality it really isn't. I mean, Taki is working in this really nice Italian restaurant, he's going to this really posh, cool cafe: no, not really. Young students in Tokyo really don't go to these places."

But Shinkai does allow that the animation technique, which apparently incorporates degrees of photography and rotoscoping, lends the film a photorealistic documentary aspect. "Visually speaking, yes, it's the other way round: in terms of animation Tokyo is more realistic, because I visited locations and we really wanted to be true to what you can actually see in Tokyo. There's a line

When I was a teenager, one of the mysteries of the world was why human emotions were not equal: I'm in love with you, you're in love with me, but it's not always equal



Taki speaks: that we'll never know how long Tokyo as we know it might last. And I think that's something most of us Japanese people are aware of, because we're really natural-disaster prone, so it might just go. So yes, I actually wanted to record this Tokyo and honour its beauty."

The big, generous skies that recur in his films, he agrees, are a legacy of his childhood. "I grew up high in these beautiful mountains, the sky was big, and you can look at the clouds all day; you just don't get bored," he says, before hazarding an analogy between star-gazing and romantic yearning: "I still like looking at the sky, stars, clouds. I think for me as a boy, maybe girls were the same as Tokyo: fab, really beautiful, great, but unavailable. I admire the sky, I admire Tokyo; yeah, some girls are pretty, but I can't get them. So I think that's why the characters I create love looking at the skies, because they're admiring something beyond their reach, and it's definitely from my own experience as a boy."

Your Name also develops another Shinkai motif, the use of twilight and magic-hour lighting effects, not only for their inherent allure but to conjure a sense of transitions, of time on the cusp and journeys at cross-paths. A key scene is set in this magical limbo when, ironically, Shinkai experimented with turning down the visual distinctions. "What's important for me to create animation is the contrast: sky, earth, people; which is brighter? And because animation uses lots of small cuts, you really need contrast to create some kind of focal point," he explains. "But in this twilight scene, I made everything neutral: nothing is brighter than anything else. I don't normally use this technique, so it was a bit of a challenge."

Similarly, in his depictions of the city, Shinkai loves images of passing trains and sliding doors, emblems of glancing chances and evanescent connections. Each of his films is patterned around a separated pair; even when a couple moves into alignment, he introduces a more distant third figure for contrast. (*Your Name* notes the yearnings of characters around Mitsuha and Taki whenever the pair seem closer.) "When I was a teenager," he says, "one of the mysteries of the world was why human emotions were not equal: I'm in love with you, you're in love with me, but it's not always equal; one person loves probably more than the other person loves. I'm not only talking about romantic love; it's the same in friendships. Nothing is entirely equal – how you care, any feelings. I don't have an answer, but I've always wondered why that is, and that's why I'm dealing with these contrasts in my movies, trying to find the answers to my questions and the mysteries of the world." 

 **Your Name** is released in UK cinemas on 18 November and is reviewed on page 92

BLACK STAR

BLACK FACES, WHITE SPACES

American film noir – a genre that derives a lot of its power from the country's deep-rooted uneasiness with itself – has had a complex relationship with people of colour. But the genre's coolness, style and unmistakable milieu have always been heavily indebted to black culture

By Angelica Jade Bastién

For all its aesthetic pleasures, *film noir* has always been a political genre attuned to the American psyche. You can't separate the brutal poetry of the dialogue from the conversations real men and women were having as they negotiated power in post-World War II America. You can't divorce the image of the femme fatale from the position women found themselves in during the 1940s and 1950s, struggling to obtain autonomy. What is the undercurrent of unease in the genre but a manifestation of an era in turmoil through McCarthyism and the Hollywood blacklist?

So it follows that the deep shadows of *noir* cannot be properly understood without considering America's fraught relationship with people of colour. The coolness, the style, the shadows of *noir* are indebted to black culture – or at the very least to white America's approximation of blackness. It has been argued that *noir* transfers the fear of blackness that permeates American culture into the existential fear of the 'other' that marks the genre. That may be true, but *noir's* relationship with blackness is still more complicated than that.

Early on in *Out of the Past* (1947), Jeff (Robert Mitchum) finds himself in an all-black nightclub as he investigates the whereabouts of femme fatale Kathie (Jane Greer). He's there to meet Kathie's former black maid Eunice (Theresa Harris). It's a brief scene, the kind that's found throughout *noir* in the 1940s and 1950s: a white character moving as a tourist through a milieu dominated by black faces. The scene works toward 'othering' Jeff (due to his ease in moving through this space) and Kathie (since Eunice is the closest thing to a friend we know

she's had). Jeff's ease in a black environment establishes his swagger, and how different his moral landscape is from the other white characters around him.

Similar scenes appear throughout *noir*. The black characters in these scenes may not be outright stereotypes the way they are in other films of the period, but they still rarely have interiority. Nonetheless, in *noir* there are times when black characters are given more interiority than was usual for films at the time. Take the affecting performance by Afro-Puerto Rican actor Juano Hernández in Michael Curtiz's *The Breaking Point* (1950), the second screen adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*, in which he's partner to John Garfield's sport-fishing boat captain. The final scene sees his son pictured standing alone on a dock in search of his father, unaware that he has been killed, his body dumped unceremoniously over the side of Garfield's boat. Throughout the film, Hernández's big expressive eyes communicate the sadness that comes with understanding how much of a lie the American dream is – a pivotal theme in *noir*. And who better understands the hollowness of that dream than people of colour?

Two films that bookend the 1950s – Sidney Poitier's screen debut *No Way Out* (1950), and *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959), starring and produced by Harry Belafonte – show what can happen when blackness doesn't just inspire *noir*, but is put at the forefront. Poitier's character Dr Luther Brooks in *No Way Out* seems to anticipate the civil rights years ahead. His character is underscored by a desire to turn anger into healing and the belief that extolling righteousness in the face of bigotry is the most noble choice. Brooks is the first black doctor at an urban hospital. He's confronted by racism, personified by Ray Biddle (Richard Widmark), a bug-eyed, virulent criminal brought into the hospital with his young brother Johnny (Dick Paxton), after a failed robbery. Johnny dies soon after Brooks performs a spinal tap on him, which sets off a chain of events that threatens Brooks's livelihood and safety.

By centring black characters in *noir*, the film brings the country's shifting racial landscape from subtext into the foreground. Poitier isn't just one man confronting the failings of his own psyche – he represents every black man and woman in the audience, and how they confront the ugly truth that no matter their excellence, they'll never be good enough in the eyes

UNDERCOVER OF THE NIGHT
Denzel Washington (opposite) in *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995); and Robert Ryan and Harry Belafonte (below left) in *Odds Against Tomorrow* (1959)





Black detectives like Somerset in 'Se7en' feel like they are traversing the line between two Americas – the one white people experience, and a second that only people of colour know

of the racist systems they must reckon with. As Brooks says to his mentor, Dr Daniel Wharton (Stephen McNally), soon after Johnny dies: “They’re not yelling at the doctor, they’re yelling at the nigger.” The black characters in *No Way Out* all grapple with racism in different ways. Lefty Jones (Dots Johnson), the hospital’s elevator operator, refuses to turn the other cheek as Brooks does. Perhaps it’s because Jones wears a reminder of the brutality of white violence on his face – a deep gash runs along his cheek. He speaks of how his sister still has to use a wheelchair after the last race riot led by the white men in the community. When Brooks suggests that he shouldn’t fight back as it’ll make him just like his tormentors, Jones spits back, “Ain’t that asking a lot of us to be better than them when we get killed trying to prove we’re just as good?” Brooks can’t reply. How could anyone in the face of such a startling truth?

It’s interesting to see Poitier in this early role display a level of anger usually unheard of for black characters in the studio era. Brooks’s anger isn’t as bold as Jones’s. It exists in flashes, like in his steely reaction when an older white woman spits on him in the hospital for trying to treat her son. This performance may lack the virility we would come to expect of Poitier, but there’s a different integrity here, in contrast to many of his later roles which required him to be an emblem for the ‘good black man’. The blistering race riot sequence, along with the focus on how black people respond to racism, gives *No Way Out* an almost radical edge.

Odds Against Tomorrow pivots on the reluctant relationship between bitter ex-con Earl Slater (Robert Ryan) and gambling addict and nightclub entertainer Johnny Ingram (Harry Belafonte) when they’re hired to do a heist. If *No Way Out* resonates most when positioning Poitier’s mindset in contrast to the other black characters, *Odds Against Tomorrow* does so in comparing the different versions of masculinity that Slater and Ingram represent. Ingram is smooth, sweet-faced even. Slater is all edges. Belafonte is an interesting choice for a *noir* lead; he’s charismatic, to be sure, but his energy and style has an ease that sticks out among the deep shadows. The end shows the price of Ingram giving in to his hate toward Slater. The heist goes south and they’re chased by police through a fuel storage depot. Their disgust toward one another turns fatalistic when they draw their guns, shoot each other, and cause a massive explosion that leaves their charred remains indistinguishable to authorities. The ‘Dead End’ sign that closes the film is meant as a stark reminder that racism is a corrosive force that destroys all in its wake. In this way the actions of Ingram and Slater seem to be presented with moral equivalence. But this misunderstands that while Ingram’s hate isn’t laudable, it is understandable, and lacks the cultural, institutionalised support of Slater’s. It’s as if the film is afraid to say that Slater’s racism is more than just a personal moral failing and that it actually represents a disease at the heart of America itself.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Odds Against Tomorrow marked the end of the original *noir* cycle, but the presence of black stars in the twilight world of the genre would return decades later with two fascinating neo-*noirs*, *Deep Cover* (1992) and *Devil in a Blue Dress* (1995). Significantly, both films not only



feature black lead characters in predominantly black casts, but were made by black directors – Bill Duke and Carl Franklin respectively.

Devil in a Blue Dress takes us back to Los Angeles in 1948. It’s a classic *noir* world, but instead of Robert Mitchum or Humphrey Bogart we find Denzel Washington – a star with more than enough charisma, skill and internal complications to authentically inhabit the role of *noir*’s most enduring archetype: the detective. The film provides a window on to the kind of black environment that earlier *noirs* relegated to the margins. At last we’re fully taken into the world we only get a glimpse of when Jeff visits the black nightclub in *Out of the Past*.

Franklin’s film has all the hallmarks of classic *noir*: voiceover, flashbacks, a labyrinthine investigation, colourful side characters and complicated women (if not outright femme fatales) like Daphne Monet (Jennifer Beals), who passes as a white woman and whom Washington’s character is hired to investigate. By focusing on Ezekiel ‘Easy’ Rawlins (Washington) and the other black characters in his orbit, the film deals with themes of identity and autonomy in ways very different to previous *noirs*. For Rawlins, almost any action can have fatal consequences. He’s a black man who finds himself in the line of fire of very powerful white figures. This forefronting of the racism of the late 1940s breathes new life into a story that would otherwise be rather typical. The film openly critiques the racism of this time and so the genre itself.

Deep Cover, meanwhile, offers a radical update of *noir* by having its story take place in a contemporary Los Angeles. It follows a detective, Russell Stevens (Laurence Fishburne), as he goes undercover as John Hull, a drug dealer on the make – an assignment that eventually puts his soul on the line. His movements are controlled by the openly racist DEA agent Gerald Carver (Charles Martin Smith), and he gradually finds himself coming to embody characteristics that lie at the heart of the most pernicious clichés of black masculinity – stereotypes he hoped to bypass and challenge by becoming a detective.

The racism critiqued in *Devil in a Blue Dress* is arguably made more palatable by being trapped in the past. But *Deep Cover* addressed a more recent blight on American life in its unflinching portrayal of the legacy of the Reagan era, during which the drug trade, government and law enforcement had upended black communities. The film probes the ways our identity is shaped by the images we seek to project, and is a sly critique of the gentrification of *noir* itself. The way Stevens/Hull deals with characters like attorney-turned-drug trafficker David Jason (Jeff Goldblum) is an open repudiation of earlier *noir*’s surface-level fascination with black lives.

One of the film's most transfixing scenes comes when Stevens/Hull has to kill a rival drug dealer – a retaliation for offing a mother of four who was in his employ. Fishburne fully embodies his character's conflict: between the need to keep his cover, and an awareness that his actions are hurting the community he wants to protect. The death isn't quick or pretty or easy to forget. "I killed a man who looked like me. Whose mother and father looked like my mother and father. And nothing happened," he says. *Noir* is full of stories of men losing their souls, but few have the mix of fury and bravery found in Fishburne's character in *Deep Cover*.

It's interesting to look at Morgan Freeman's Detective William Somerset from David Fincher's *Se7en* (1995) as part of the same 90s *noir* revival. Where *Deep Cover* and *Devil in a Blue Dress* openly critique racism and feel boldly political, *Se7en* elides these thematic underpinnings. Somerset is an older detective, sick of the morally depraved unnamed city he works in and eager to retire. But the tension between him and his short-tempered partner David Mills (Brad Pitt) rests on age not race. However Freeman's performance still exists within the tradition of black actors in *noir*, because the weariness that he brings to his character recalls the same sort of downtrodden emotional state that the new-to-the-game detectives in *Deep Cover* and *Devil in a Blue Dress* grow to have. Black detectives like Somerset feel like they are traversing the line between two Americas – the one white people experience, and a second that only people of colour know. They're asked to move between both worlds, an experience that isolates them from everyone.

QUEENS OF THE UNDERWORLD

If *Deep Cover* and *Devil in a Blue Dress* offered new depths for black men in *noir*, the genre still takes a very limited view of black women. *Noir* is all about perspective – who gets the voiceover, whose mind we're inhabiting, whose journey proves to be the emotional anchor. The 1980s and 1990s put women – femme fatales in particular – in the lead (think 1987's *Black Widow* and 1994's *The Last Seduction*). But it was never a black woman.

Nonetheless, there are some beautiful, albeit rare, supporting roles for black women in *noir* that acknowledge their interiority. In Joseph Losey's *The Big Night* (1951),

EDGE OF DARKNESS
Sidney Poitier and Mildred Joanne Smith (below) in the last of the classic noirs *No Way Out* (1950); and Jeff Goldblum and Laurence Fishburne (opposite) in neo-noir *Deep Cover* (1992)

In 1950, a scene in which a black woman's pain is acknowledged, and in which a black woman is comforted by another black woman, feels revolutionary

the teenage Georgie (John Drew Barrymore) finds himself enjoying the musical stylings of an all-black jazz band until the drummer's rhythm brings to mind the savage beating of his father that sets off the film. Superimposing the image of this beating over the drummer questionably aligns blackness with violence. It isn't until Terry Angelus (Mauri Lynn) comes to the stage, singing a song punctuated by loneliness, that Georgie's waking nightmare is broken. Outside the club he runs into her and is effusive in his praise. "I think you're the most wonderful singer in the whole world. That isn't all. You're so beautiful even if you are a –." The word he *doesn't* say hangs between them, souring the tender connection. She slumps against the light post, resigned, as if this isn't a new occurrence. Just another blow, another night, another show. Lynn's performance only lasts a few minutes, but it's the most honest of the entire film.

In *No Way Out*, Mildred Joanne Smith (in her only film role, as Cora, the wife of Poitier's character) is given two great moments. The first is a monologue as she holds a sleeping Brooks. She discusses the weight of trying to move through a world that abhors her blackness and his. The second involves her going to Dr Wharton to let him know Brooks got arrested in order to force an autopsy to clear his name. When Wharton and Edie Johnson (Linda Darnell) leave, Cora and Wharton's maid, Gladys (Amanda Randolph), are left alone in the room. Cora breaks down once they are out of sight. "That's it, baby. Let it go. They're gone now. They can't hear you," Gladys says to comfort her. In 1950, a scene in which a black woman's pain is acknowledged, and in which a black woman is comforted by another black woman, feels revolutionary.

More recently, in films like the misguided *noir* pastiche *Sin City* (2005) and shows like Netflix's *Daredevil*, Afro-Latina Rosario Dawson has brought charm and confidence to *noir*. In *Devil in a Blue Dress*, Lisa Nicole Carson plays Coretta James, a friend to Monet. She's neither good girl nor femme fatale. She's a woman who is openly sexual, cunning and with an edge of sadness. In *Out of Time* (2003), Sanaa Lathan is a series of contradictions. She's a damsel in distress yearning to be saved by Denzel Washington's lead detective, but she's also a villain orchestrating his downfall for her own ends. In *Angel Heart* (1987), Lisa Bonet plays the ridiculously named Epiphany, who blends innocence with blistering sexuality. Some of these characters are better written than others, but all are granted an interior life by the actresses themselves. One who stands out as being more well thought-out than most is Lornette 'Mace' Mason, played by Angela Bassett in Kathryn Bigelow's futuristic sci-fi *Strange Days* (1995). Bassett completely inhabits the role, so much so that you wonder why she's not the film's lead – she's overqualified as sidekick to Ralph Fiennes's Lenny Nero.

Noir is a powerful genre. But when it denies the interiority of people of colour, it loses the truth it seeks to find lurking in the shadows of the American psyche. **S**



This article is an edited version of a chapter in the new book *Black Star: A BFI Compendium*. *No Way Out*, *Deep Cover*, *Se7en* and *Devil in a Blue Dress* screen in November at BFI Southbank, London, as part of the BFI's 'Black Star' season. *Odds Against Tomorrow* is out now on BFI DVD and Blu-ray, and is reviewed on page 99



REX FEATURES (OPPOSITE) GRANT ARCHIVE (O)



DRAMA QUEEN

Peter Morgan has long been fêted for his remarkable ability to animate the personal conflicts that lie behind great historical events, but now he has finally been given a canvas commensurate with his true talents, in the ten-part Netflix series 'The Crown', which charts Elizabeth II's early years

By Trevor Johnston

Great storytellers really can mess with your mind. There's a scene early in *The Crown*, writer Peter Morgan's new series for Netflix, where I'm startled—shocked indeed—to find myself shedding tears over, of all things, the British royal family. Every fibre of my ideological being is telling me these feudal relics should have been dispatched years ago, though possibly more humanely than the Romanov against-the-wall method. Still, I'm genuinely touched by the sight of the Windsors of yore singing carols in the parlour, stoic and resilient while everyone in the room knows that the ailing King George VI won't see another Christmas. All that privilege can't cure the cancer eating away at a fragile soul who wasn't suited for the monarchical role, even though brother Edward's abdication left him with no choice in the matter. And in the midst of the forced seasonal cheer, George's somewhat plain and unexceptional eldest daughter Elizabeth knows that she's next in line—and has absolutely no choice either.

And so the story unfolds, over ten one-hour episodes (though mini-movies might be a more accurate description), gradually drawing us into the unique circumstances of a family whose lives are not their own. Tradition and duty take precedent over individual choice, and for all the bowing and scraping, the palatial living quarters, the jewels and ermine, what's at stake in this first season of *The Crown* is unyielding pressure upon the inexperienced young Elizabeth to maintain the crown's mystique in a Britain transformed by the social upheavals of World War II and now emerging into a modernity with much

less room for the deference of previous eras. Facing the young queen in weekly prime ministerial meetings is Winston Churchill, the nation's great saviour, now old and infirm but hanging on to the post by sheer determination and ego – can she really bring influence to bear to see the great man out of office? Where too does she stand with her sister Margaret, who's fallen for a divorcee? The constitutional carnage after uncle Edward followed his heart with Wallis Simpson rather than accept the strictures of his inheritance still remains very present, like smoke that hasn't cleared after an explosion.

After his script for Stephen Frears's post-Diana drama *The Queen* (2006), and his play *The Audience* (2013), which offers an overview on the continuity of the monarch as prime ministers come and go, all this is a subject area with which Morgan by now has some familiarity. But his fascination, it seems, is that of a slightly bemused dramatist rather than some regal hagiographer. "I could not care less about the royal family; it's absolutely scandalous that they should still exist in an egalitarian society," he says, taking a few moments out of the whirlwind that is *The Crown's* worldwide press launch in Los Angeles. "But at the same time the sheer illogicality and stark-staring madness of having a royal family is something worth exploring. It becomes fascinating the deeper you go, and I try to be impartial, judging them all with a bit of compassion. We the people don't know what we want from them, whether they're our gods or our slaves, and so they're trapped in a kind of hellish predicament."

Discerning the full contours of that predicament becomes apparent in the course of *The Crown's* first season, which leads us from George VI's final days through Elizabeth's accession in 1952, and then through the constitutionally turbulent early years of her reign to the cusp of the 1956 Suez Crisis. Throughout it's evident that Morgan has really found his *métier* with the immersive scope and Wagnerian pulse of longform television. With the box-set binge already established as a significant part of our viewing habits, and Netflix not the only streaming content provider in the marketplace (Amazon has also invested heavily), this is hardly news in itself. However, Netflix's reported £100 million investment in the first season alone – with shooting already under way on the second season before the first one is ready to air – is certainly a significant vote of confidence in the British film industry, given the established roster of production and acting talent *The Crown* draws on. Essentially, Netflix is banking on the quality and prestige exuded by this particular project to entice new subscribers to sign up to the service, clearly speaking to a different demographic than the provider's expensive, much-hyped Baz Luhrmann urban music saga *The Get Down*. Whether audiences internationally are quite ready for Morgan's near-forensic investigation of the peculiar curlicues of Britain's constitutional arrangements and their ongoing emotional consequences on the Windsor family, only time will tell, but there's scant evidence of what's on screen being pitched to a broader common denominator.

"From the very first meeting, Netflix was determined that this would be on air all over the world on the same day, and if you're a storyteller that's a very enticing proposition," explains Morgan, who's listed as the show's 'creator' and has penned the first two seasons in their entirety. "If this was just a normal TV series, I wouldn't have done it, but this is a new model, even if the paradigm is really in its early days. In ten years' time, we'll be having series which will open with the bombshell impact of our current movie franchises – the Bournes, *Star Wars*,



ROYAL FLUSH
Claire Foy and Matt Smith as Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh (left); Elizabeth on her wedding day with her father George VI, played by Jared Harris (top); and John Lithgow as Winston Churchill (above), in *The Crown*

Bond, etc – but combine that with the greater complexity of longform television. Something that's global in its appeal, but with that bit more depth. It's in its infancy now, but we're beginning a whole new era."

That sense of cinematic/small screen hybridity which Morgan describes is apparent from the off in *The Crown*. The first two episodes, directed by Stephen Daldry, and shot like all the rest in cinematic widescreen, certainly deliver more than enough production values to fill the frame – not least in the way the visuals bring out the surreal weirdness of a life spent facing crowds of people vigorously waving at you for no apparent reason. Messrs Julian Jarrold, Philip Martin and Benjamin Caron complete the directorial roster, though by the time they take over, Daldry's work has set out the series' stall, the deliberate pacing effectively giving room for the performances to breathe. Like Elizabeth herself, Claire Foy makes more impact as the series runs on, and John Lithgow's Churchill beds in once we're over the initial distraction of the physical transformation he's undertaken for the role. Jared Harris, meanwhile, offers a heart-tugging performance as George VI.

This is, though, very much a writer's medium, and all concerned are there to serve Morgan's overall vision, which at first glance looks like a grandiose project to bring to life the chafing tectonic plates of post-war history, to which his intimate, synoptic play *The Audience* could previously only pay expositional lip service. Unlike the genuinely aristocratic Julian Fellowes

← Oscar winner for the script of Robert Altman's *Gosford Park* (2001), creator of ITV's hugely successful posh drama series *Downton Abbey* (2010-15) and *Lord Fellows of West Stafford*, no less – Morgan himself was hardly born into this, having grown up the son of European émigrés in a German-speaking London home. Indeed, his first cinematic venture into this terrain with his script for *The Queen* began inauspiciously with the producers locked in conflict with him over the direction of the material. "I think they wanted some sort of 'who killed Diana?' script," Morgan recalls. "But I was really interested in writing about the relationship between the Queen and Blair, who they begged, begged me not to put into the screenplay. And actually, if you want to discover the source of *The Crown*, you have to go right back to *The Deal* in 2003 because that's where I basically found my feet.

"What I did in that was deliberately write about two politicians, Blair and Brown, who'd always been treated comedically or satirically. Instead I treated what had gone on between them impartially and emotionally, which of course exposes the emotional underpinning to certain historical moments. In the whole journey from there to *The Crown*, what I realised is that it's not that interesting to dramatise earth-shattering historical events, but far more so to delve into intimate family events. Ultimately, it's in the tiny details that the big statements are made."

Indeed, that structuring principle of shaping a drama around two contending individuals who each represent a defining attitude – for Brown and Blair in *The Deal*, read Elizabeth II and Blair in *The Queen*, David Frost and Richard Nixon in *Frost/Nixon* (2008), James Hunt and Niki Lauda in *Rush* (2013), and so on – has undoubtedly served Morgan well over his subsequent screenwriting career. He's so good on telling thumbnail-sketch dialogue, and convincingly stitching together his characters' past travails and present formation, that he generally makes a decent fist of covering the films' slightly diagrammatic construction.

Much less persuasive are the stylistic outliers, including the slightly bonkers *Hereafter* in 2010 (which went from uncertain spec script to Clint Eastwood superproduction at a pace with which Morgan himself wasn't altogether comfortable) and Fernando Meirelles's *360* (2011), an ill-starred attempt to refit Arthur Schnitzler's 1897 play *La Ronde* for a modern era of international air travel. Above all, though, it's Morgan's ability to present us with characters whose flaws and contradictions he refuses to judge, which gives his best writing an enduring quality. This is particularly notable in the Channel 4 single drama *Longford* (2006), in which Jim Broadbent's controversial peer shows a heroically spiritual attitude of forgiveness towards convicted killer Myra Hindley (a bracingly courageous Samantha Morton), yet at the same time reveals a profound self-delusion in his inability to register the fact of her appalling deeds.

With *The Crown*, however, the chance to work within a more expansive story world rather than get everything done and dusted in feature film running time effectively allows the human insight he brings to his work even fuller scope to flourish, thus providing the novelistic dimension viewers absolutely relish about the longform medium. There's room here to let the characters develop over time, for instance, and a principal pleasure is seeing



What I've realised is that it's not that interesting to dramatise earth-shattering historical events, but far more so to delve into intimate family events

Claire Foy's Elizabeth, mousy and daunted to begin with, show an underlying steel once she begins to gain confidence in her role. Having established the central dynamic of duty versus desire, the series' wider canvas also offers space for supporting characters to have their moment too, with former *Doctor Who* Matt Smith's Duke of Edinburgh a surprisingly astute moderniser when he's not drinking to forget his emasculated role within the royal household. The overall form too is flexible enough to deal with sidetracks and variations, as Morgan relishes the opportunity to unleash unexpected flashbacks at the start of sundry episodes to enrich the overall sense of a historical through-line, yet also proves confident enough to devote much of one episode to the political ramifications of London's Great Smog of 1952, and another – perhaps even more disarmingly – to modernist painter Graham Sutherland's controversial portrait of Churchill.

"There's one or two of them I'm reasonably happy with," is Morgan's own cagey assessment at this stage, while also damping down talk of a purported six-season trajectory by suggesting the need to step back and reflect before proceeding further. What's surprised him most, though, is how it's now likely to play with British audiences, given the upheavals in current events between writing and transmitting the first series. "Because it's about the British constitution and our political leaders, and how they combine in the way the country's constructed, it can't help but have a whole new resonance in the period of Brexit, which couldn't have been farther from my mind when I set out on this journey.

"What was even more striking was polishing up the scripts dealing with the Suez Crisis at the time of the Brexit vote, and being struck by the similarities of a country mortgaging its international respect as a stable democracy. In the light of our current betrayal by a whole political class, and, for me, a failure of the democratic process, I found myself looking favourably on the continuity provided by someone like the Queen, and thanking God that she wasn't actually elected. And, of course, I'm actually pretty disgusted by my own political class that I'm reduced to thinking like that." ☺

MONARCHY IN THE UK
Despite believing that the existence of the royal family is a scandal in an egalitarian society, screenwriter Peter Morgan (above) shows great compassion in his portrayal of them in *The Crown*

i The first series of *The Crown* is available to view now on Netflix

A large, high-contrast black and white portrait of a woman with dark, curly hair, looking upwards and to the left. The image serves as the background for the central text.

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PREVIEW

COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Few political film movements have transformed the process of making and showing films as thoroughly as Ogawa Productions did

By Mark Nornes

In Japan in the 1960s, one outfit radicalised radical cinema, pushing typical filmmaking strategies to extremes and forging new ways of making political films politically. This was Ogawa Productions – far more than a production company. It was led by Ogawa Shinsuke, one of many famous directors who emerged from Japan's public relations film industry in the early 60s. Ogawa joined artists like Matsumoto Toshio, Higashi Yoichi, Tsuchimoto Noriaki and Kuroki Kazuo (not to mention great cinematographers like Suzuki Tatsuo and Tamura Masaki), who bolted en masse from the economically comfortable strictures of PR for uncertain independence.

After several failed pitches to producers, Ogawa took a new tack that in retrospect appears fateful. He started a film on distance learning and assembled a production crew from the student protesters he was filming. He and his collaborators tied their filmmaking from start to finish to the

perspective of their subjects, ultimately moving in with them. Like all young activists, the students Ogawa gathered around himself had passion, lots of time and minimal material needs. But having finished *Sea of Youth* (1966), they found there was no way to show the film. So they transformed into a nationwide network for screening independent films and called themselves the Independent Screening Organisation (Jishu Joei Soshiki no Kai), or Jieiso for short.

Jieiso's second effort was *Forest of Oppression: A Record of the Struggle at Takasaki City University of Economics* (1967), one of the biggest hits of the student movement era. To make the film, Jieiso activists spread out across Japan to study the state of the student movement. They wrote and shared elaborate reports on their findings while holding workshops on filmmaking and film theory. In the end, they decided to shoot at a minor provincial economics university, not a prestigious national school. Audiences were shocked and inspired by the passion of these economics students and the film established Ogawa's reputation.

Suddenly rich from the receipts for *Forest of Oppression*, Jieiso launched an ambitious initiative that pushed the limits of movement cinema. They changed their name to Ogawa Productions and moved to a village outside Tokyo which the government had earmarked as the site for

a new international airport. Sanrizuka was a collection of picturesque hamlets about to be entombed in cement, a development the local farmers did not take kindly to. The filmmakers performed their usual research, identified the most radical hamlet – Heta – and moved into the outbuilding of a sympathetic farmer.

With this move they evolved from a typical political collective into something new. They lived and worked collectively, shooting an epic series of films about another collectivity – the protesting farmers. Ogawa and his activists made seven films over nine years, one of the great monuments of Japanese film history.

In this period, a curious production style emerged around the charismatic figure of Ogawa Shinsuke. It probably arose from the activists' dedication to sharing research, along with Ogawa's love of eating, drinking and talking into the night. Every night, after following the events of the construction site and the reaction of the farmers, Ogawa Productions members would gather to share the day's events and lessons. Sometimes they would screen rushes for discussion. It was a ritual of sharing meals and drink and ideas. The next day, the crew set out to film without Ogawa. The strengthening ethos of collectivity translated into a unique method where the crew knew



Community spirit: Ogawa Shinsuke (second from right) and the crew of *Sanrizuka: The Peasants of the Second Fortress*, including DP Tamura Masaki (far left)

exactly what to shoot, so the director stayed home to read and chat up the neighbours. It was a fascinating dynamic of interdependence and independence. Cognisant of their own quirkiness, assistant director Fukuda Katsuhiko documented their approach in *Filmmaking and the Way to the Village* in 1973, which was lost for 20 years but has now resurfaced.

It was a rough lifestyle, living together in the village and making no income; Ogawa even banned sex within the collective. But everything was for the movement, and that made all the difference. Perseverance was easier and quitting all the more difficult. It is estimated that more than 120 people were in Ogawa Productions over the years; when people abandoned the movement they usually snuck out silently and shamefully in the middle of the night. One can get a strong sense of the dynamic seductiveness of Ogawa and his collective, as well as its darker side, from Barbara Hammer's documentary *Devotion* (2000).

When considering a film movement, the natural inclination is to focus on the personalities and the films. But that limited view prevents us from understanding how Ogawa Productions saw itself. While writing *Forest of Pressure: Ogawa Shinsuke Productions and Postwar Japanese Documentary* (2006), I often asked former members for an evaluation of the film movement. They invariably started telling stories about memorable film showings; I eventually realised that for Ogawa Productions, the film movement was a screening movement.

Jieiso put distribution at the heart of Ogawa Productions. When they changed the name and started releasing their first Sanrizuka films, the group already had a nationwide alliance of volunteers, student groups, unions and partisans of every stripe. They kept a Tokyo office in Shinjuku, the heart of the counterculture. Their account books for films like *Summer in Sanrizuka* (1968) and *Sanrizuka: The Peasants of the Second Fortress* (1971) reveal that the films were shown somewhere nearly every day of the year, from high schools to union halls to classrooms behind the barricades at universities.

The screenings were much more than film showings. Participants arrived in hard hats, holding signs and bullhorns. Plain-clothes police surveilled the proceedings. Introductions to the films were political speeches. Spectatorship was remarkably participatory. Audiences clapped and jeered. When they saw something they liked they screamed, "*Igi nashi!*" ("Right on!"); when the riot police misbehaved they would shout, "Nonsense!" And when the lights went up, discussions ensued, hats were passed, and the donations were returned with rental fees to support the next film.

This system worked beautifully. Ogawa Productions built on the Jieiso framework by establishing branches in Osaka and Kyushu in the south, to Hokkaido and Tohoku in the north. Each branch published its own newsletter and forged its own regional screening movement. They also laid plans for making their own documentaries, though only one was realised, Tsuchimoto Noriaki's *Prehistory of the Partisans* (1968). For the blank spots on their network's map, the group would send members out with 16mm prints and a one-way train ticket. They would go from village



Cabin pressure: *The Wages of Resistance* (2014)

to village, setting up showings and collecting donations until they could buy their return ticket with something to spare for production funds.

The grand experiment peaked with the screening movement for *Peasants of the Second Fortress* in 1972. This coincided with a troubling escalation in violence within the student movement, where inter-sect lynchings were a longstanding problem. In the winter of 1971-72 members of the United Red Army terrorist group, hiding in the mountains, 'purged' 12 of their own members and ended up in a violent standoff with police on live television; in May 1972, the Japanese Red Army attacked Lod airport in Israel, killing 26 and wounding scores.

Back in Sanrizuka, the protests were attracting thousands of combatants and becoming more violent. As construction of the airport neared completion, a fierce confrontation near Heta village left more than 100 policemen injured and three dead. Immediately afterwards, a young man from Heta, one of the stars of the Sanrizuka films, hanged himself in the woods. The 2014 documentary *The Wages of Resistance* (co-directed by Otsu Koshiro, Ogawa's cameraman up until *Summer in Sanrizuka*) shows how this suicide has reverberated through the lives of the filmmakers and farmers to the present day. The intensification of violence also helps account for the abrupt shift in tone of Ogawa Productions' masterwork *Heta Village* (1973), which pushes the spectacular protests to the far background to focus on how the violence was affecting the people of the village.

The escalation in ugliness also took a toll on social activism across the country, bringing the political season to a close. Ogawa Productions branches closed one after the other. When it was time to distribute *Heta Village*, they discovered their network had imploded. In the past the circulation of prints and collection

of donations was all but automatic. Now they had to rethink their film movement.

Nowhere was this shift more obvious than in the theatres. Audiences were no longer participatory. To attract people, Ogawa Productions began decorating the venues with banners and bamboo. They exhibited portraits of all the farmers and filmmakers in the lobbies, displaying the equipment used to shoot the movie people were about to see.

In the coming year the collective devoted many of their discussions to introspection and thinking about strategies for a movement cinema without a political movement. Members searched for new sites for collective living and filmmaking. *Dokko! Songs from the Bottom* (1974) was one fruit of this labour. Ogawa chose Yamagata as their new home, moving more than 30 filmmakers to a small silkworm barn in a sleepy village deep in the northern mountains.

In a new series of films, *The Magino Village Story*, they turned their attention to the millennia of history secreted in the villages around them. They came to realise that this was the reservoir of passion and energy that Sanrizuka farmers had tapped into in their protests. However, with the end of movement politics, Ogawa Productions become reliant on the cultural capital of international film festival screenings to push their films through a diminishing number of independent film theatres.

At the same time, members started quitting. Entering their 30s and 40s, they were less willing to deal with the sacrifices required by collective living. As his collective dwindled, Ogawa discovered the vibrant new movement cinemas of South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and China. He began applying his charismatic energies to creating a transnational movement cinema just as his body failed him in 1992. Since then, though, the documentary cinemas of Asia have enjoyed explosive growth – a situation Ogawa surely looks down upon, smiling. 

 **The season 'Ogawa Shinsuke and Ogawa Pro: collective filmmaking and the culture of dissidence' runs at the ICA, London, from 17 November to 11 December**

The films were shown nearly every day of the year, from high schools to union halls to behind the barricades at universities

IN A MINOR KEY

Tony Conrad kept deliberately to the fringes of art, film and music – and that is precisely where his importance lies

By Frances Morgan

In his book *Beyond the Dream Syndicate: Tony Conrad and the Arts After Cage* (2008), Brandon W. Joseph suggests the ‘minor history’ as a way of framing the work of Tony Conrad, the New York artist, musician, filmmaker and educator who died in April this year, aged 76. Minor history – the phrase was coined by Conrad’s collaborator and friend Mike Kelley, by way of Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of ‘minor science’ and ‘minor literature’ – challenges more conventional models of historical and artistic development. Minor artists might work on the fringes, but can exert a pressure on more established artistic categories, moving between practices and media, muddying the flow between important movements and their key figures.

The model works particularly well for experimental forms of music, many of which have remained on the peripheries of formal music and visual art practice, while influencing them – most of all, these experimental forms have challenged deeply held tenets of authorship and the finished work. In Tyler Hubby’s new film *Tony Conrad: Completely in the Present*, Conrad makes an early bid to overthrow these particular conventions: he maintains that, unlike his near contemporaries Steve Reich and Philip Glass, composers who defined American minimalist music, he “resisted all ideas of professionalisation”. Instead, talking about his early, drone-based music with La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela and John Cale under the collective name Theatre of Eternal Music, he says, “I wanted to end composing, get rid of it. I wanted it to die out!”

Conrad’s desire to upset the distinctions between artist, audience and media is one theme running through Hubby’s warm portrait of the artist as a lifelong contrarian. The desire could never be fulfilled: for Conrad to keep making his antagonistic work, composing or filmmaking or painting had to maintain their dominance; and his work existed in their institutions – galleries, venues, record labels, universities. This dynamic insider-outsider relationship gives the minor history much of its energy, and a similar energy powers the best parts of *Completely in the Present*. The title is from a quote by Conrad, to the effect that history and music both exist “completely in the present”. As if to illustrate this, the opening sequence sees Conrad setting up microphones in the street to record the ambient sound of New York’s Lower East Side. Pointing up to a nondescript loft window, he notes that we’re looking at the building in which “all the goings-on” started – his best-known film, *The Flicker* (1965), was made there, and his soundtrack to Jack Smith’s *Flaming Creatures* (1963); it was behind that window that The Velvet Underground began. Yet the most important thing to Conrad seems to be how the street sounds right now. “Beautiful!” he beams, as the city’s noise swirls around him.



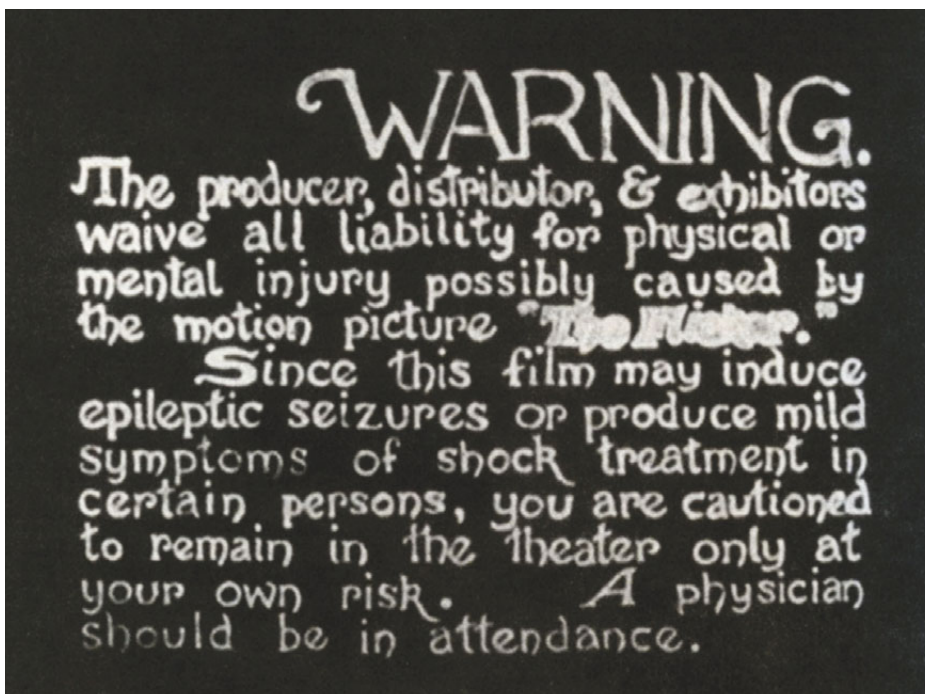
Tony Conrad, left, in the shortlived band The Primitives, 1965, with Lou Reed, Angus MacLise, John Cale

How can a film about an artist’s long life sustain this now-ness? However minor the subject, the conventions of music documentary demand something closer to a major history, told in chronological order supported by endorsements from peers, carefully chosen archive footage and selective commentary on the past. This film’s well-lit, confident and mostly male talking heads include the millions-selling dance musician Moby, and Jim O’Rourke, formerly of Sonic Youth, who compares Conrad’s unique violin style to Miles Davis and

Conrad ‘resisted all ideas of professionalisation’. Instead, ‘I wanted to end composing, get rid of it. I wanted it to die out!’

the jazz pianist Cecil Taylor. Released so soon after Conrad’s death, *Completely in the Present* inevitably tends to the hagiographic, but risks reducing him.

Still, Conrad’s enthusiastic collaboration in the film indicates that he had come to feel



You have been warned: the opening of Conrad’s best known film, *The Flicker* (1965)

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA



A lost genius of early American cinema was the biggest treat at Pordenone this year

By Geoff Brown

"Tony," she cried, through the conduit of the intertitle, "until the snake is dead I will never speak to you again." Tony's close relationship with the titular star of *The Rattlesnake – A Psychical Species* (1913), a savagely strange western directed by and starring Romaine Fielding, caused jaws to drop at the 35th session of Le Giornate del Cinema Muto at Pordenone, the first under its new director, Jay Weissberg. But even snake love faded alongside the cinematic revelations in this teeming festival's most gripping strand, devoted to John H. Collins.

Who? Had he not died at the age of 28 in the influenza pandemic of 1918, the question would likely be superfluous: Collins would be enthroned in the pantheon with Griffith, John Ford, Raoul Walsh and other early figures who developed the art of screen storytelling to a pitch of terse American eloquence. After his death, *Moving Picture World* called him "probably the youngest director of note in the country"; but he was soon forgotten, the films abandoned to dust, deterioration or the nitrate bonfire. Some films re-emerged in the 1970s: William K. Everson appraised them enthusiastically in his invaluable book *American Silent Film* (1978). But 40 years on, there remains plenty of scope for print restorations and archival research.

Pordenone rounded up four features and four shorts – a snapshot, but evidence of a filmmaker with a quirky narrative gift and bright camera eye, easily able to combat the clichés of his source material. Even the director's hair – revealed in a photograph as an untamed thicket – set him apart.

The first short, *The Man in the Dark*, an Edison product of 1914, immediately collared attention when it led us into the hero's sorrowful flashback through a heart-shaped camera iris. Other inventive formal devices enlivened progress through scripts littered with triangular relationships, good guys and bad guys, community schisms, and a poor heroine trapped in the middle. Some images came surrounded by black, boxed into oblongs and isolated within the frame. Props, sets and characters formed emotionally strategic compositions, with teasing views through doors and windows.

The Edison company, Collins's employer from 1904, when he joined as a lowly handyman, never had money for elaborate sets, but his manner of staging interiors – spare, intense, with frequent close-ups – camouflaged the penny-pinching. *The Everlasting Triangle*, another 1914 two-reeler, showed off his genius for exploiting locations, best seen in a finale that foreshadows von Stroheim's *Greed*

Collins's manner of staging interiors – spare and intense – camouflaged the penny-pinching



Viola Dana in *The Girl without a Soul*

(1924) in the way it pushes its characters to psychological extremes in brutal desert terrain. Even after 1916, when Collins moved up to Metro Pictures, a component of the future MGM, the images arrived chiselled, routine scenarios cleverly served with a hop, skip and jump.

Collins was blessed with another great gift: the actress Viola Dana, eight years his junior, and from 1915 his wife. She might have been only four foot, eleven and a half inches, but every half-inch was put to good use, especially in the heart-stopping *Blue Jeans* (1917), a rural melodrama fashioned from a 19th-century play famous for its ringing climax – the unconscious, horizontal hero heading straight for a sawmill's buzz-saw. Dana had the kind of 'plain' looks perfect for offering a window into her characters' souls, and for reflecting that lively spirit always helpful when your loved one is about to be sliced into mince meat.

She was versatile, too. In *The Girl Without a Soul* (1917) she played identical twins, pampered aspiring violinist and mischievous household drudge, finding humanity in both. In *The Cossack Whip*, a 1916 Edison feature, she was a Russian peasant-turned-ballet dancer, seeking revenge for Cossack atrocities. None of the dancing would have impressed Diaghilev, but what did lumbering movements matter next to Viola's grit, Collins's skilful cross-cutting, the aerial flights of his cameraman John Arnold, and the rumbustious journey through a preposterous plot? Five programmes of Collins's films wasn't enough.

Weissberg's other distinctive strand collected some of the small surviving body of Polish silent cinema, terra incognita for most festival attendees. Ryszard Ordynski's *Pan Tadeusz* (1928), based on Adam Mickiewicz's epic poem, was handsome, partly impenetrable, and worthy. Two other features leaped national boundaries more easily: Ordynski's *Janko the Musician* (Janko Muzykant, 1930), made with synchronised sound but superbly eloquent in its silent version; and Henryk Szaro's *A Strong Man* (*Mocny człowiek*, 1929), conventional material at heart but with a glittering modernist surface. None of these, though, got the audience talking as much as Viola Dana's darting eyes, that rattlesnake, or the piercing imagination of John H. Collins, missing master of American silent cinema. ☺

the need to present his story in the definitive manner he had so far avoided. Thoroughly at home in front of the camera, tireless, he stomps around the forecourt of the Lincoln Center in a fluorescent cagoule, still contemptuous of the classical music establishment against which he and fellow composer Henry Flynt protested in 1964, picketing Stockhausen's 'imperialist' concerts. Conrad likes a picket: years later, at the University of New York in Buffalo, where he taught for decades, he held a one-man protest against his former collaborator La Monte Young – following the dissolution of the Theatre of Eternal Music, Young had kept hold of the numerous tapes they had made, insisting that he was the sole composer. Young came to speak at the university; Conrad showed up with a sign reading "LA MONTE YOUNG DOES NOT UNDERSTAND 'HIS' WORK".

Conrad's long-running dispute with Young over the ownership, or non-ownership, of the music they made together is one of the narratives Hubby unpicks with great care. He seems to intuit how conflicts between freedom and control arise in experimental music. Perhaps Hubby has to move more fluently between past and present as the film progresses because Conrad's work starts to do likewise: along with reissues, there are reconstructions of former projects, such as the unfinished film *Women in Prison*, from the early 80s, which Conrad turned into a new installation in early 2016, and the inevitable retrospective attention of the art world, which Conrad had previously existed at a remove from.

As early as 1975, Conrad was anxious that people wouldn't be able to see how his work sat together, that as he moved across disciplines, although he found his work "consistent and directed", others would not. It is certainly hard to see, superficially, how films such as *Beholden to Victory* (1980), in which actors including Mike Kelley improvised military scenarios, or his earthy, almost eco-feminist experiments with cooking and pickling rolls of film in the mid-70s, or indeed *Women in Prison*, in which Conrad, Kelley and the artist Tony Oursler drag up to play female inmates in a meticulously constructed jail – how any of these fit into the New York scene with which Conrad is most often associated. However, Hubby's careful framing of these projects, and Conrad's commentary, encourage the viewer to focus less on the finished works, and more upon the philosophy and processes behind them, foregrounding Conrad's politics as well as his preoccupation with materials. The Whitney curator Jay Sanders proposes that it's Conrad's audience, rather than the artist, that draws together the threads of his work. It's true that Conrad's drones, generously, allow you to form your own music from them, and that his structuralist films affect each viewer quite differently. But *Completely in the Present* works hard to show how this is only partly the case – capturing a working life spent running counter to master plans and grand narratives, yet still devoted to perpetual motion. ☺

i **Tony Conrad: *Completely in the Present* will be screening on 24 November as part of the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. For details, visit hcmf.co.uk**

THE STORY SO FAR



Bard education: Matías Piñeiro's *Hermia & Helena* riffs on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in its tale of emotional miscommunication

This year's Wavelengths programme at Toronto offered typically bold, disorienting challenges to received ideas

By Jordan Cronk

Wavelengths, the Toronto International Film Festival's annual programme of "daring, visionary, and autonomous" cinema, is never in thrall to the traditional components of film, but it's generally narrative that is first to be cast aside. Even by these standards, the best of this year's selection of Wavelengths features, shorts and installations seemed particularly intrigued by different narrative strategies and reimagining how one might go about telling a story through moving images.

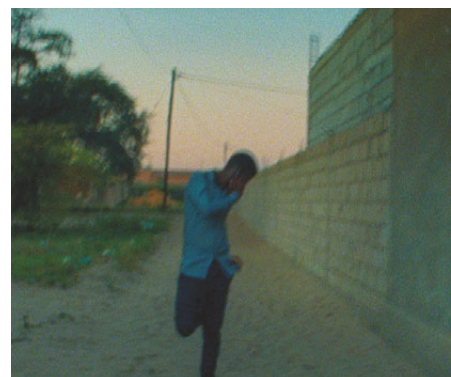
The Argentinian director Matías Piñeiro has been pushing narrative in seductive new directions for nearly a decade now. His highly regarded series of Shakespeare adaptations (including *Viola*, 2012 and *The Princess of France*, 2014, both previous Wavelengths entries) have employed the texts as conceptual models for contemporary readings which slowly find resonance in the everyday dramas of their respective characters. As its title suggests, Piñeiro's latest, *Hermia & Helena*, once again riffs on Shakespeare, though this time the material only faintly echoes its source, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Instead, he utilises his protagonists,

Camila and Carmen (Piñeiro regulars Agustina Muñoz and María Villar), to tell a tale of physical displacement and emotional miscommunication.

Unfolding fluidly between Buenos Aires and New York (this is Piñeiro's first film made outside Argentina), the film follows Camila and Carmen as the former prepares to take the latter's place in a Stateside theatre residency programme. As their roles switch, so do their relationships: Camila becomes involved with a selection of Carmen's friends and lovers; these affairs are mirrored in flashbacks to Camila's equally carefree former life in Argentina. Fascinated by the beauty of movement and language, Piñeiro applies the theme of translation to the fabric of his narrative, allowing his weightless, intimate style to blossom. A meticulously staged and scripted late-film confrontation between Camila and her estranged father (Dan Sallitt) is an unassumingly moving encounter that portends an exciting new chapter in Piñeiro's career.

Piñeiro is a veteran compared with his 29-year-old compatriot Eduardo Williams. After several well-regarded short films, his first feature, *The Human Surge*, is singular and unclassifiable. Williams's subject is a most modern phenomenon, global interconnectedness: he tries to articulate something elemental about contact, communication and encroaching technology. Structured in three parts, the film moves agilely from the flooded streets of Argentina to the coastal enclaves of Mozambique to the humid jungles of the Philippines.

The people we meet in these settings are less characters than collectives of anonymous civilians: in Buenos Aires we watch as an unemployed young man and his friends engage in casual sex-acts for webcam pay; in Maputo, a second group of young men concede to workaday labour following their own perfunctory attempts at online self-commodification; and in the Philippines, friends meet at a watering-hole rendezvous, and some go on a futile search for a cyber café. Williams films these incidental, unconnected activities through a languorous, observational lens, often trailing his subjects from a distance. He moves between episodes by way of increasingly radical devices – the most memorable finds his camera burrowing into an anthill only to emerge from the soil



Eduardo Williams's *The Human Surge*

several thousand miles away. As each successive diversion solidifies into its own discrete drama, a more metaphysical realisation takes shape: in our technocratic future, a corporeal integrity may in fact prove to be the most valuable currency of all.

The Human Surge embodies another wholly contemporary notion – cinema’s capacity to function outside the confines of a theatrical space. Like one of last year’s Wavelengths highlights, Isiah Medina’s *88:88*, *The Human Surge*, shot on a combination of digital and super 16mm, seems – in a manner after its characters, who spend much of the film staring into screens – to encourage a multiplicity of viewing options. Whether it ultimately plays better in a theatre or on a laptop is immaterial; the suggestion that a computer screen may unlock an additional thematic dimension in the film is enough to confirm Williams’s distinctly *au courant* sensibility.

Similar thoughts arose during other Wavelengths titles. *The Woman Who Left* – which won Lav Diaz the Golden Lion in Venice – is, like all of the Filipino filmmaker’s work, an advertisement for the theatrical experience. The film – about a wrongly convicted widow out for revenge on her ex-boyfriend following a 30-year stint in prison – would not register with the same impact on anything less than a cinema screen, not just because of its runtime (it clocks in at, for Diaz, succinct 227 minutes), but because of the long takes and monochromatic aesthetic.

The same might be said for the Ukrainian director Sergei Loznitsa’s *Austerlitz*, an observational documentary made up of statically composed images of tourists at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Oranienburg, Germany. What Loznitsa’s camera captures, however, isn’t moments of sober reflection, but instead disinterested glances, nervous laughter, family photo ops, and errant selfies. Watching such egregious, disconcertingly familiar activity unfold on screen among a general audience only amplifies the film’s reflexive power.

Even more pronounced in their formal and site-specific conceptualisations were the otherwise very different *Singularity*, a five-screen installation by Alberto Serra, and *I Had Nowhere to Go*, a first-person audiovisual memoir created by the Turner Prize-winning video artist Douglas Gordon in collaboration with Lithuanian artist-filmmaker-critic Jonas Mekas. Like Serra’s recent Cannes standout *The Death of Louis XIV* (also in Wavelengths), *Singularity* – which transformed

‘Luna e Santur’ is a hypnotic piece of stroboscopic horror, with a pair of hooded figures engaged in a kind of domestic exorcism

Toronto’s 99 Sudbury Street gallery into a space of interactive engagement – displays a more intimate and touching side of the Catalan director’s frequently perverse pillagings, filling its quintet of slightly askew screens with rich, almost romantic, imagery. Modelled after the domestic melodramas of Rainer Werner Fassbinder, the roughly 12-hour film (projected simultaneously as four three-hour loops, plus a 20-minute prologue) spreads its story of sexual and industrial exploitation in a remote mining community across a variety of spatial and temporal borders. With each screen acting as an individual node in a greater fiction – spanning eras as it flirts with both surrealism and science fiction – *Singularity* casually liberates narrative from undue considerations of duration and linearity, granting each viewer a unique autonomy within a carefully organised environment.

A work predicated on the sensory nature of the theatrical experience, *I Had Nowhere to Go* consists largely of extended sequences of dark screen accompanied by the 93-year-old Mekas reading in voiceover from his memoir. The film’s few visual flourishes – glimpses of Mekas sitting before Gordon’s camera, interstitial images of natural and abstract beauty, brief bursts of frame-filling colour – are punctuated by a dynamic soundtrack ranging from ambience to explosions. It summons in the mind’s eye a vivid image of wartime struggle and exile (Mekas fled Lithuania for New York City during World War II) that words can only approximate. Alternately harrowing and humorous, Mekas’s recitation of his text is eloquent in inflection as well as a valuable historical testimony; by isolating and accentuating cinema’s two primary constituents, Gordon has crafted an expressive and appropriately daring edifice through which to convey a life’s journey.

The most routinely revelatory of TIFF’s many varied programming initiatives, the Wavelengths shorts programme this year felt unusually unmoored. Largely made up of work by less proven artists, the four-evening slate – for technical reasons, relocated from its traditional home at the Art Gallery of Ontario to

a smaller theatre in the TIFF Bell Lightbox – was perhaps inevitably not quite as consistent as in years past. The highs, however, were typically thrilling – chief among them *Luna e Santur* by the Los Angeles-based artist Joshua Gen Solondz, a hypnotic piece of stroboscopic horror, featuring a pair of hooded figures engaged in a kind of domestic exorcism. As each frame flickers to a disorienting rhythm, Solondz stages a kind of dance between bodies and light, playing optical tricks with the viewer’s vision as the action alternates between the sensual and sadistic.

This sort of sensory display, in which perspective must be surrendered to a certain procedural logic, reflects a longstanding tradition in the experimental sector. Other works, such as Manuela De Laborde’s silent sculptural study *AS WITHOUT SO WITHIN*, and *Ten Mornings Ten Evenings and One Horizon*, a deceptively elaborate landscape film by Tomonari Nishikawa, apply perceptual illusions to less brazen ends. And then there was *Indefinite Pitch*, by New York’s James N. Kienitz Wilkins, which seems to offer up tradition itself for investigation. Over a procession of black-and-white still images of Berlin, New Hampshire, Wilkins unpacks a stream-of-consciousness monologue that begins as a story of a failed movie pitch before expanding into an increasingly humorous and self-deprecating account of socio-historic curiosities and creative paralysis. What Wilkins pulls off with *Indefinite Pitch* (by several measures the funniest film I saw at TIFF) is more than a mere balancing act; by playfully exploiting voiceover – one of narrative cinema’s most tired devices – he manages to loosen the self-serious strictures of avant-garde filmmaking while interrogating its utility in an increasingly digitised domain.

Indefinite Pitch offhandedly raises pertinent questions about a medium continually pronounced dead by those less attuned to its finer developments. As much as any other Wavelengths title, the Argentinian director Gastón Solnicki’s new feature *Kékszakkallú* responded with a challenging, invigorating vision of cinema’s continued vitality. Framed as a reimagining of Béla Bartók’s opera *Bluebeard’s Castle*, the film, which follows several young girls through vignettes of adolescent intrigue, retains only a tangential relationship to its source material, characteristic of a narrative that dispenses with conventional forms of exposition in favour of abstraction. (In that sense the film would pair as well conceptually with *Hermia & Helena* as it would formally with Angela Schanelec’s fractured, elliptical feature *The Dreamed Path*, also shown at Wavelengths.)

With its static compositions and exacting dramaturgy – stark architectural designs occupy individual frames as often as bewitching illustrations of the female form – Solnicki’s film constructs an ordered yet precarious psychological space for its characters to inhabit, as seemingly unrelated events build to an appropriately operatic conclusion. Like its young subjects, standing by film’s end on the precipice of adulthood, *Kékszakkallú* steps slowly but assuredly into uncharted territory – a gentle reminder that cinema itself is young and full of possibilities. ☺



Alberto Serra’s multi-screen *Singularity*



Lav Diaz’s *The Woman Who Left*



BFI LONDON
FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2016

SAN SEBASTIAN
FILM FESTIVAL
OFFICIAL SELECTION 2016

a
Makoto Shinkai
film

animation directed by
Masashi Ando
(SPIRITED AWAY, PRINCESS MONONOKE,
WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE)

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Character Design: Masayoshi Tanaka Music: RADWIMPS
Executive Producers: Minami Ichikawa Noritaka Kawaguchi Co-Executive Producers: Keiji Ota Shinichiro Inoue
Masanori Yumia Tatsuro Hatanaka Junji Zenki Naoya Moriya Planning: Genki Kawamura
Producer: Yoshihiro Furusawa Co-Producers: Katsuhiko Takei Koichiro Ito Line Producer: Yuichi Sakai
Music Producer: Sayoko Narukawa Sound Director: Haru Yamada Sound Design: Eiko Morikawa
Production: TOHO CO., LTD. / CoMix Wave Films Inc. / KADOKAWA CORPORATION / East Japan
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Production Company: CoMix Wave Films Inc. TOHO CO., LTD Release

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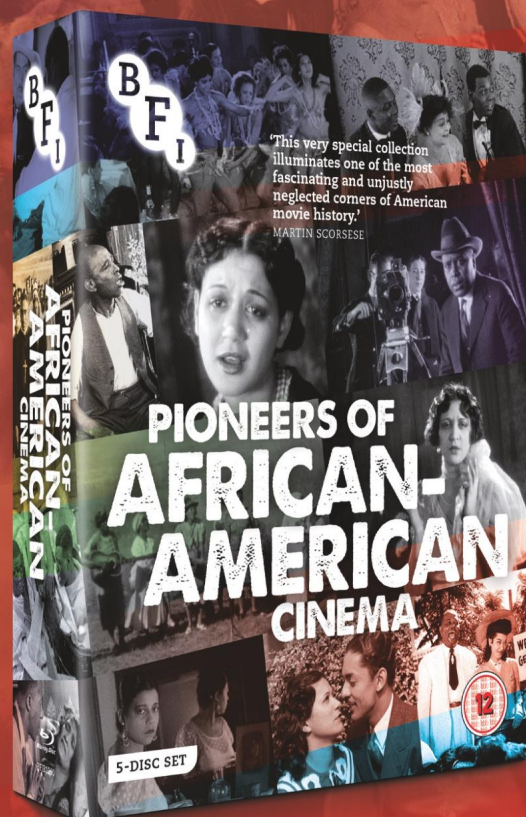
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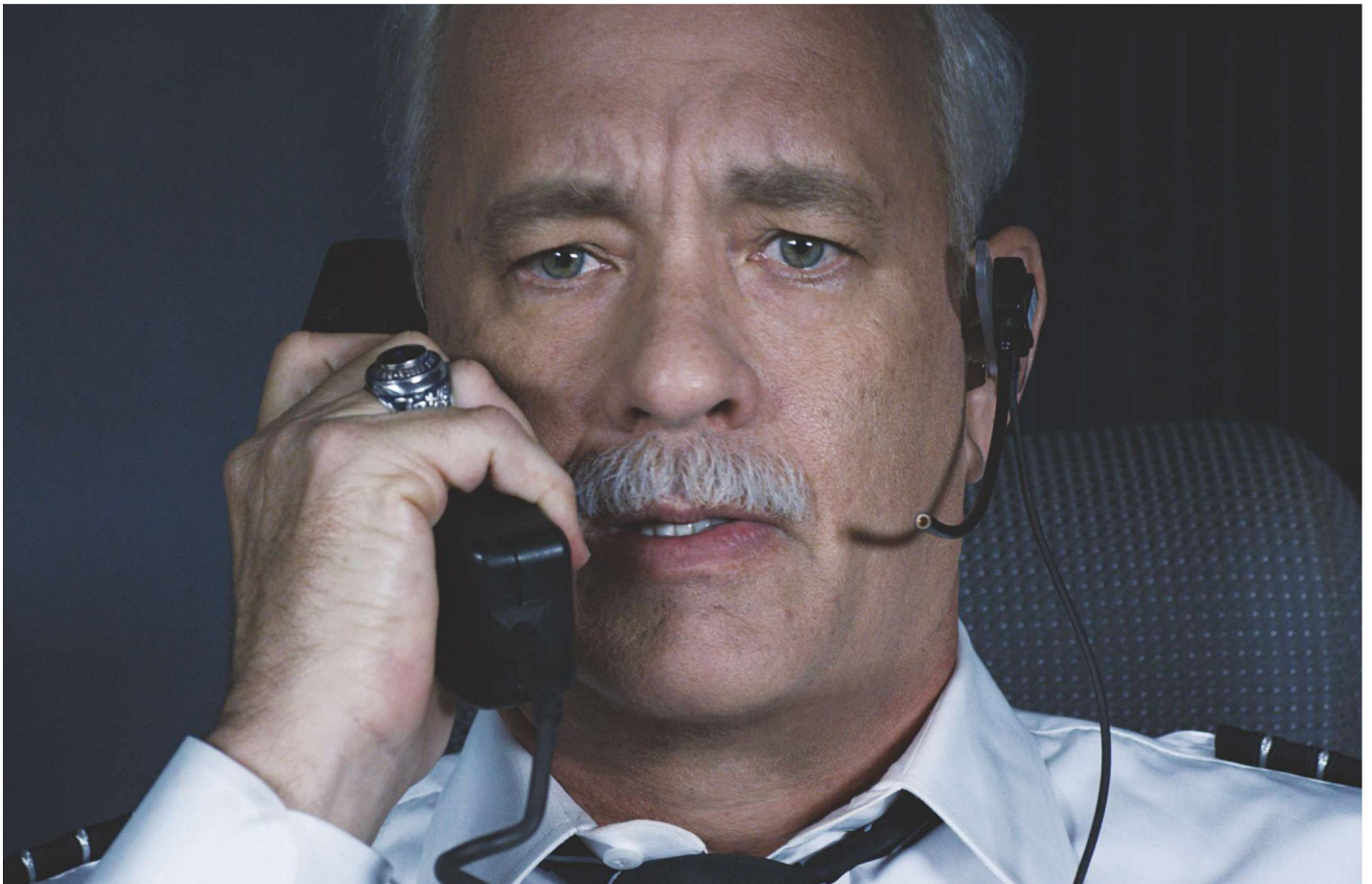
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Reviews



87 **Sully**

Clint Eastwood's film holds the attention for its sense of understated pride in 'just doing your job' – a phrase that sums up both director and protagonist – and its flashes of quiet humour



58 Films of the Month



64 Films



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Arrival

USA 2016

Director: Denis Villeneuve

Certificate 12A 115m 48s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

Some directors hotwire projects and drive them hell for leather in the opposite direction. Denis Villeneuve likes to stay in his lane. Since his commercial breakthrough *Prisoners* (2013), the Oscar-nominated director has made a name for himself as a dab hand at an edgier category of multiplex fare. For example, whatever one thought of the cynical posture and/or politics of his Tex-Mex cartel thriller *Sicario* (2015) – a movie hailed in America by *National Review* for its conservative bona fides – it was clearly the work of a filmmaker with an eye for visceral details. Even while cribbing a bit from the Kathryn Bigelow playbook, Villeneuve conjured up ample atmospherics to surround his smart storytelling.

Sicario's shapely pacing and embedded sense of dread clearly impressed the right people, because Villeneuve's next gig is overseeing the much anticipated and potentially very valuable *Blade Runner* sequel, supposedly due in cinemas before the original film's 2019 dateline. Not since *Prometheus* (2012) has the global fan community – non-*Star Wars* division – salivated so slavishly over an act of brand extension. As such, there are two ways of looking at Villeneuve's interstitial project *Arrival*. On the one hand, this costly, glossy incursion into sci-fi terrain gives him a preliminary try-out for the role of the new Ridley Scott – that is, a gifted visual stylist who never met a script he didn't like. On the other hand, it's a film that tries, early and often, to glom on to the visionary lineage of Kubrick, Tarkovsky and Spielberg, a wannabe contender for the modern genre pantheon.

Villeneuve passes the first test with flying colours. *Arrival* has the look and feel of a big-ticket production, albeit torqued towards millennial melancholy, complete with a muted, blue-grey colour palette by cinematographer Bradford Young. The early scenes have the stark, anxious clarity of a fable by Ray Bradbury; after learning of an apparent alien invasion from the Twitter-connected students in her advanced linguistics class – a wonderfully plausible bit of staging in which the surest sign that something big is happening is the dead silence of a dozen heads bent over their smartphones – grammar warrior Dr Louise Banks (Amy Adams) is conscripted by the military to lead a delegation to one of the extraterrestrials' spherical ships (a dozen of them are hovering menacingly in locations around the world). It's a sudden call to action that also turns her into an audience surrogate for some close encounters of the third kind.

This set-up closely resembles *Sicario* in that it takes a brilliant female protagonist and puts her in a situation that powerfully undermines her painstakingly acquired expertise. Lumbering around in a hazmat suit, Louise is miles outside her academic comfort zone, and can't use her vocabulary to keep feelings of fear and inadequacy at bay. But where *Sicario* played out as a crypto-sexist study in distaff passivity, *Arrival* mostly lets its heroine hold her own, and in doing so gives Adams an actual character to play: few actresses are as adept at conveying a native intelligence without

lapsing into brainiac caricature. As the staff mathematician, Jeremy Renner projects his usual mild annoyance, as if he can only barely be bothered to gawp at green-screen special effects (surely he's had his fill of aliens after *The Avengers*), but it's not detrimental to the overall entertainment value. (Renner really does act like the second, glowering coming of Harrison Ford sometimes; maybe he should be exiled to Amish country next, for a remake of *Witness*.)

Louise's methodical MO and ability to process and codify the non-verbal, inky-hieroglyphic communiqués of the aliens – whose size, shape and slyly creature-designed strangeness are not worth spoiling here – makes her an impressively active heroine. Her clashes with superiors, played by Forest Whitaker and Michael Stuhlbarg, flirt with cliché – arguments about protocol, and the requisite bit where she's kicked off the beat as if she were Dirty Harry – but there's enough juice in the scenario to hold our interest. Imagine if in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) Patricia Neal, instead of just parroting 'Klaatu barada nicto' whenever she was in a tight spot, had had to figure out what it meant, literally, syllable for syllable: that just about evokes the dislocating intrigue of a movie where the technologically advanced visitors aren't all that concerned about making themselves clear to their new hosts.

The inherent intellectual excitement of advanced cryptography keeps *Arrival* feeling awake and alert for most of its running time, and there's a nice tingle to the filmmaking whenever the earthlings are airlifted to their arranged meeting place (once again, Villeneuve is great at dread filtered through awe). But the script, which is based faithfully on a piece of short fiction by Ted Chiang, eventually downshifts from its fleet procedural mode into a quasi-mystical register that's bathed in rich, heavy emotions but also somehow less imaginative than originally promised, especially when it's revealed that the resolution to the problem is based less on individual agency than on the hidden inner workings of a universe beyond our comprehension. Pauline Kael's complaint that 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968) was a cosmic cop-out – "drop up" – also applies here, though this story is angled less towards genuine enigma than a too-tidy variety of *deus ex machina*.

Of course, regardless of his metaphysics, Kubrick was also (re)inventing the basic grammar and syntax of the science fiction movie, and in ways that are unlikely to be persuasively rewritten any time soon (like great silent cinema, large stretches of 2001 could be played without words; and when they do enter the equation, they're deceptive and lethal). Nearly 50 years on, *Arrival* pretty much can't help being derivative, and Villeneuve doesn't necessarily try to hide his influences either. A screen-filling close-up of a human hand pressed against a giant partition, beneath pounding musical accompaniment, is a clear shout-out to Stan the Man, but without the deft touch that Villeneuve's fellow Canuck Matt Johnson showed recently in *Operation Avalanche*, which improbably managed to cut the monolith slightly down to size.

There are other lofty nods and homages on offer – including some very Malickian music cues in a section whose cutting is indebted to *The Tree of Life* (2011) – but *Arrival* is ultimately closest to Scott's *The Martian* (2015), with which it shares a very contemporary post-globalisation



Grammar girl: Amy Adams as Louise Banks

Nearly 50 years on from '2001', *Arrival* pretty much can't help being derivative, and Villeneuve doesn't necessarily try to hide his influences



Jeremy Renner as maths whizz Ian Donnelly



subtext. In both films, the plot hinges on the willingness of China's government (there the space programme, here the military) to work hand in hand with other national powers towards mutually beneficial outcomes. (The fantasy of *The Martian* is a future in which the Chinese go out of their way to help retrieve a wayward Yankee movie star.) It's interesting to note that the French-Canadian Villeneuve disguises and distils an agenda of American exceptionalism more smoothly than the septuagenarian Sir Ridley before him. But only to a point: watching a movie work an urgent, we-are-the-world groove without ever shifting its perspective (or aesthetic sensibility) away from the West offers a caustic sort of amusement.

The odds that Villeneuve will ever again make a movie in Canada seem long: the civically specific commentary of *Polytechnique* (2009), which evoked the 1989 Montreal massacre, or *Enemy* (2013) – the sharpest Toronto-plays-itself film of its era – are things of the past for a director whose artistic compass has become powerfully magnetised due south. It has pointed him straight towards Hollywood, and he should get cosy, because if *Arrival* is any indication, it's likely he's going to be right at home there for a long time. ☺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Shawn Levy
Dan Levine
Aaron Ryder
David Linde
Screenplay
Eric Heisserer
Based on the story
Story of Your Life
written by Ted Chiang

Director of

Photography
Bradford Young
Editor
Joe Walker

Production Designer
Patrice Vermette
Music

Jóhann Jóhannsson

Supervising

Sound Editor
Sylvain Bellemare
Costume Designer

Renée April

Visual Effects

Hybride Technologies
Rodeo FX
Oblique FX
Alchemy 24
Raynault VFX
Fly Studio
Mels
Framestore
Shed
Folks VFX

Stunt Co-ordinator

Mark Desourdy

@Xenolinguistics, LLC

Production

Companies
Filmation
Entertainment and
Lava Bear Films
present a 21 Laps
Entertainment
production
A Denis Villeneuve
Film

Executive Producer

Stan Wlodkowski
Eric Heisserer
Dan Cohen
Karen Lunder
Tory Metzger
Milan Popelka

Cast

Amy Adams
Louise Banks
Jeremy Renner
Ian Donnelly
Forest Whitaker
Colonel Weber
Michael Stuhlbarg
Agent Halpern
Mark O'Brien
Captain Marks
Tzi Ma

General Shang
Abigail Pniowsky
Hannah aged 8
Julia Scarlett Dan
Hannah aged 12
Jadyn Malone
Hannah aged 6
Frank Schorpion
Doctor Kettler
Lucas Chartier-
Dessert
Private Lasky
Christian Jadah
Private Combs

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
E1 Films

The present. The arrival of multiple massive spacecraft in locations around the globe prompts the world's governments to devise a unified means of communicating with the extraterrestrial visitors. In America, the military approaches Louise Banks, a linguistics professor specialising in non-verbal sign systems, who is grieving for her dead daughter. Along with a team of scientists, mathematicians and soldiers, Louise has a series of close encounters with the 'heptapods' – giant, hovering, squid-like creatures that do not speak but instead spray out symbols written in an inky substance. Louise thinks the alien language can be decoded, but her superiors grow impatient, especially once the media starts reporting that some countries have interpreted the messages as either a declaration of war or an offer of advanced weapons technology. After China takes its communications offline, it seems that a global conflict is imminent, and the decoding operation is shut down. But, guided by visions involving her daughter and a Chinese general, Louise realises that the language is palindromic and multi-directional, and that the answer to saving the present lies in relating future events. She makes a phone call to a Chinese military commander and, using personal information gleaned from her future self, persuades him to help out. We see that Louise's daughter is not in fact dead, but not yet born. Louise resolves to go ahead with the pregnancy even though she knows about its eventual tragic outcome.

Doctor Strange

Director: Scott Derrickson
Certificate 12A 114m 49s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Like Nick Fury (Agent of SHIELD), with whom he shared a comic (*Strange Tales*) in the 1960s, Dr Strange – originally ‘Master of Black Magic’ but eventually ‘Sorcerer Supreme’ – has proved more useful as a way of binding Marvel Comics’ universe by appearing in cameos across many titles than as a headliner in his own several-times-cancelled book. Whenever Spider-Man, the Hulk or the Fantastic Four have problems with the supernatural rather than aliens or bank robbers, they visit Dr Strange’s Greenwich Village Sanctum Sanctorum for a consultation – as alluded to here in a neat mid-credits sting featuring one of Marvel’s star movie characters.

Created in 1963 by artist Steve Ditko and Stan Lee (perhaps patterned on an earlier Lee-Jack Kirby character, the short-lived Dr Droom), Stephen Strange has had several longish runs in his own comic but also several lengthy hiatuses in the limbo inhabited by heroes without their own title; there is currently an ongoing Dr Strange book almost solely because Marvel’s movies division has chosen to give him a film push, and it remains to be seen whether it will last any longer than his previous incarnations. Strange’s surreal world, with trips to other realms given a unique look by Ditko, has proved attractive to many comics artists and writers, even if it has seldom been quite as appealing to fans, who’ve admired the work but have been much more passionate about characters like Ghost Rider or Wolverine, whose bursts of superstar popularity have eclipsed the Earth’s Sorcerer Supreme.

The appeal extends to filmmakers, who have also been drawn to the character: there was a silly *Dr. Strange* TV movie in 1978 and a relatively impressive animated feature in 2007, and Strange has often been closely approximated at budget levels from minimal (Jeffrey Combs in *Doctor Mordrid*, 1992) to healthy (Nicolas Cage in *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*, 2010). Scott Derrickson, who climbed back to modest respectability with *Sinister* (2012) as a way of atoning for the 2008 remake of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, joins the list of lucky-to-get-the-gig and professional-enough-not-to-mess-it-up Marvel directors – essentially a safe pair of hands with enough creativity to deliver a solid entertainment but not so much that he’ll break the mould (the negative example of Ang Lee’s 2003 *Hulk* is often cited).

Doctor Strange is stuck with a need to go over the origin story. Like other Marvel characters of the same vintage (notably Spider-Man, Iron Man and Daredevil), the doctor has to suffer great loss, physical injury/transformation and attain superpowers while learning harsh life lessons that set him on a course to becoming a better person. In an accelerated arc, the arrogant, materialist surgeon loses his career and pride, has a spell as a stubble-bearded derelict (the film omits alcoholism from his résumé), is confronted with the revelation that a world of magic exists, and then speed-reads his way to sorcerous supremacy (he has a photographic memory) to the point where he is able to face formidable enemies who have been studying magic their whole lives. The script – by Jon Spaihts (*Prometheus*), with drafts



Strange days: Benedict Cumberbatch as Dr Strange in Scott Derrickson’s Marvel Comics adaptation

by Derrickson and his *Sinister* co-writer C. Robert Cargill – sells this by suggesting that Strange is fit to replace the Ancient One as Sorcerer Supreme because, like her, he’s willing to break rules, even to the extent of using forbidden time-tampering in a confrontation with extra-dimensional tyrant Dormammu (here represented as a big corrugated face in the sky) to come up with a messy but workable way to save the Earth.



Tilda Swinton and Chiwetel Ejiofor

It’s possible that Dr Strange has survived as a character for so long because writers and artists want to write about him and draw him. When Marvel attained a counterculture hipness in the late 1960s, artist Gene Colan and writer Roy Thomas gave Strange an acid-hued credibility (including a Tom Wolfe cameo), which explains why Stan Lee is reading Aldous Huxley’s *The Doors of Perception* in his cameo here. Though *Doctor Strange* has several of the recurring weak spots of Marvel’s movies – an underwhelming lead baddie (Mads Mikkelsen’s Kaecilius) who turns out to be the stooge of a real Big Bad, an overqualified female lead (Rachel McAdams) who has to be shoehorned into the story and then stands on the sidelines; an overreliance on thumping as a superpower, which is especially galling with characters who are supposed to be magicians – the same potential for eyekicking appeal leads to a great many pleasing, disorienting sequences.

The film’s Dark Dimension is, well, *darker* than Ditko’s Dalí-cum-Escher locale, but is refreshingly unusual for a comic-book movie, building on the trip to infinite smallness in *Ant-Man* (2015) with touches of the last act



As with all Marvel films, casting is key. There's a potential overlap between Stephen Strange and Iron Man's alter ego Tony Stark (who were drawn a lot alike in the 1960s and are again now) in the combination of snarky put-downs, reformed high-living with occasional relapses, and self-propelled rise to supremacy in their fields. Benedict Cumberbatch manages not to seem like a warmed-over Robert Downey Jr (though, of course, they both have a Sherlock on their CV – and Cumberbatch even inherits Downey's Irene Adler, Rachel McAdams). Not only does he convey growing spirituality and sorcerous power but also a confidence and even a relish in irresistible accessories such as the Cloak of Levitation (here, for the first time, a character in its own right) and the all-seeing Eye of Agamotto (an infinity stone, one of the plot-pegs Marvel uses to wire together its film franchise). Whenever the action threatens to get samey or the spectacle verges on the monotonous, the film can rely on Cumberbatch's sense of fun to tide it over. This isn't so much the story of a man shouldering responsibility as of a pompous ass who unbends enough to share his enjoyment of his achievements with lesser mortals.

One reason Mikkelsen's Kaecilius and McAdams's Christine Palmer make so little impression is that the film sets up Strange's eventual struggle with Chiwetel Ejiofor's Mordo by giving the number-two disciple more interesting things to do than the ostensible villain. (As with Mark Strong's Sinestro in 2011's *Green Lantern*, a hero's comics nemesis is introduced as a mentor/ally but 'goes dark' unnoticed in the finale.) Meanwhile shaven-headed Tilda Swinton turns out to be inspired casting for Strange's guru and predecessor the Ancient One (a man in the comics) and brings ineffable cool (plus an impressive bald pate) to a part that could easily have been a simple dispenser of arcane exposition. **B**

It has several of the recurring weak spots of Marvel's movies but a great many pleasing, disorienting sequences

('Beyond the Infinite') of 2001: *A Space Odyssey* (1968). Newly made for the movie is the Mirror Dimension, which riffs on the folding-up-cities gambit of Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010) to allow shifts of gravity, buildings morphing and multidimensional martial arts; for once this makes fully justified use of the 3D format that is now mandatory for superhero movies but tends to become a distraction rather than an added feature. There's a genuinely inspired magic fight scene that takes place while time runs backwards for everyone but the combatants, so that Strange and his allies battle Kaecilius and his zealots while Hong Kong spectacularly and pleasingly undestroys itself all around. After that, there's a nice touch as the arrogance of the original Dr Strange, who plays disco trivia games while performing a brain operation, reasserts itself when he puffs himself up to trap a vastly powerful cosmic entity in a *Groundhog Day* time loop ("Dormammu, I've come to bargain") on the principle that if he can't win a fight, he can at least lose it endlessly and monopolise the extradimensional tyrant's attention for eternity if he doesn't back off our plane of existence.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Kevin Feige
Screenplay
Scott Derrickson
C. Robert Cargill
Story
Jon Spaihts
Scott Derrickson
C. Robert Cargill
Director of Photography

Ben Davis
Edited by
Wyatt Smith
Sabrina Plisco
Production Designer
Charles Wood
Music
Michael Giacchino
Costume Designer
Alex Byrne
Visual Effects

Industrial Light & Magic
Production Company
Marvel Studios presents
Executive Producers
Louis DeSposito
Charles Newirth
Stan Lee
Victoria Alonso

Stephen Broussard
Cast
Benedict Cumberbatch
Doctor Stephen Strange
Chiwetel Ejiofor
Karl Mordo
Rachel McAdams

Christine Palmer
Benedict Wong
Michael Stuhlbarg
Nicodemus West
Mads Mikkelsen
Kaecilius
Tilda Swinton
the Ancient One
Benjamin Bratt
Scott Adams

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Some screenings presented in 3D
Distributor
Buena Vista International (UK)

New York. Dr Stephen Strange injures his hands in a car crash and can no longer work as a surgeon. Rejecting the care of colleague/ex-lover Dr Christine Palmer, he seeks alternative therapies. From a patient who has miraculously recovered from a spinal injury, he learns of Kamar-Taj, a mysterious site in Nepal. There he encounters the Ancient One, Earth's Sorcerer Supreme, and her chief disciple Mordo. Strange discovers that he has an aptitude for magic. Though he cannot heal his hands, he learns mystic martial arts, teleportation and other disciplines.

Kaecilius, a former disciple of the Ancient One, is intent on summoning Dormammu, overlord of the Dark Dimension, to devour the Earth. Kamar-Taj is connected by magic doors to three sanctums around the world.

Kaecilius and his followers destroy the London sanctum and attack the New York sanctum, where Strange, assisted by a sentient cloak of levitation, puts up a strong defence. Wounded in the battle, Strange returns to his old hospital and asks Christine to save his life – while he successfully fights for his soul on the astral plane. Kaecilius kills the Ancient One and destroys the Hong Kong sanctum, but Strange uses spells to reverse the destruction. Visiting the Dark Dimension, he stalemates Dormammu and makes a bargain to protect the Earth. Kaecilius and his disciples are claimed by Dormammu. Moving into the New York sanctum, Strange becomes the new Sorcerer Supreme.

Disillusioned to discover that his teacher used dark magic to extend her life, Mordo turns against Strange.



Love and other catastrophes: Julia Kijowska as Agata in Tomasz Wasilewski's interlinked love stories set in Poland during the transition from communism

United States of Love

Poland/Sweden 2016

Director: Tomasz Wasilewski

Certificate 18 105m 42s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

What does it mean to love another person? No answers are offered up by Tomasz Wasilewski's linked cycle of melodramas, but troubling possibilities are floated: that what pulls us towards other people has little in common with what might make us happy; that it's a short journey from attraction to the urge to punish; and, strikingly, that relationships between individuals might come to reflect the political conditions in which they occur.

Wasilewski – on his third feature here after 2013's *Floating Skyscrapers* – sets his stories in 1990, just as Poland is entering its post-communist phase. The population is being encouraged to regard itself as liberated, but the romantic experiences of lead characters Agata (Julia Kijowska), Iza (Magdalena Cielecka) and Renata (Dorota Kolak) indicate the very opposite psychic state. "Love will be the most important thing in your life," a religious studies teacher blandly tells Agata's daughter's class. That may well be borne out in these women's lives, but there's nothing happy or enriching about the romantic fixations that plague them. Agata,

despite an attentive husband and a historically passionate marriage, yearns painfully for her priest. Schoolmistress Iza, suddenly and brutally rejected by her lover, hopelessly bids to regain his loyalty by using his daughter against him. Renata, obsessed with her neighbour Marzena, deploys surveillance and subterfuge to get close to her.

The habits of paranoia, self-denial, envy and secrecy bred by a repressive state seem to thread through all these unhappy interactions; and those in whom the most trust is invested are prone to inconsistency and sudden bouts of cruelty. Only Marzena (Marta Nieradkiewicz), a dance teacher who performs fiercely jaunty routines to the strains of Whitney Houston and dreams of becoming a model, seems to embody the new freedoms rather than the old restrictions. But the fact that things go bleakly awry for her too is an indication that the promised changes and freedoms won't necessarily supply any improvement in general interpersonal relationships or in the particular lot of women.

The fulfilment promised by romantic love might seem to be the dream of these women, but their conception of it is abstract, fixed on hopelessly unobtainable targets. "I'll do anything," Iza tells Karol (Andrzej Chyra) when he breaks off with her, but her offer is without either hope or substance: all he wants her to do is disappear, and all she has to give him are stalkerish acts of desperation guaranteed to

increase his contempt. Where a seemingly solid real-life love is offered – to Agata, by her husband Jacek (Lukasz Simlat) – it's rejected in favour of her fruitless fantasy about their priest. The priest himself seems, in a sermon Agata attends at the height of her obsession, to be communicating a personal message to her about prioritising loyalty to her family over romantic fantasies about him – though the direct communication appears to be a projection of her fevered state.

All in all, it's a bleak picture of the human condition, shot in appropriately cadaverous tones by Oleg Mutu (key cinematographer of the Romanian New Wave). That the stories intersect at unexpected points seems to promise a climactic reveal of some kind, but matters unfold in a manner more haphazard than intricate, with the reshuffling of events emphasising the difference in the women's perspectives and priorities rather than serving to reveal their secrets to the viewer. Indeed, real motivations remain for the most part distinctly murky. Has Agata had a relationship with her priest that's now over, or is their connection in her head? Is Renata in love with Marzena, plotting some sort of crime against her, or simply in need of company and inept at the art of friendship? In the film's most deliberate obfuscation, a climactic conversation between Iza and her ex-lover's daughter Wiola (Julia Chetnicka) is played out largely in silence. Just what Iza has done – threatened the girl,



A sense can surface, amid all this relentless misfortune and self-destruction, that we are watching walking case studies of romantic dysfunction rather than people



Women in love: the film's bleak vision is captured in appropriately cadaverous colours by DP Oleg Mutu

pleaded with her or just shared damaging information with her – we're left to guess.

Such ambiguity could give rise to the suspicion that Wasilewski, having chosen to tell women's stories, is being a touch condescending about the eternal impossibility of understanding them. A sense can surface, amid all this relentless misfortune and self-destruction, that we are watching walking case studies of romantic dysfunction rather than people. It's hard to imagine a film about men locating their identities so entirely in their love affairs – and Wasilewski doesn't compensate for this as, say, Almodóvar might by infusing his women with enough vibrancy and wit to preclude their being seen as victims. Fine performances stir the frustrating sense that rather fuller iterations of these women – an Agata who's more than a sad ecclesiastical groupie, a Renata whose prior life we know a little more about – were there to be uncovered, had the mooning and masochism made way for a few more layers of characterisation.

Still, there's no doubt that keeping his protagonists at such a distance has created mystery, and sometimes real suspense. The technique is particularly effective in the story of Iza, which recalls Michael Haneke's *The Piano Teacher* (2001) in its unflinching portrayal of a sharply controlled woman's descent into desperation, and which provides the film's most trim and punchy segment. Elsewhere, brief scenes speak volumes, as when a few lines, looks and gestures during a family dinner reveal Agata's growing indifference, Jacek's pained bafflement and their daughter's sad awareness of both. Even when emotions and motivations are more obscure, the performers' physicality, delivery and demeanour – Kijowska's luminous but unreadable face and fractious physical energy; Cielecka's extreme, angular beauty and air of barely suppressed fury; the defiant perkiness with which a drunken Marzena tries to face down a photographer who's obviously up to no good – fill out and complicate the story.

Meanwhile answers to the questions that Agata's priest poses to his congregation about love – "Is love the thing that drives us? What does love give us?" – remain obscure, trapped somewhere between the bestial rutting that Agata and Marzena watch on a homemade porn video and the stylised romanticism of the ballroom dancing that Marzena teaches to couples in evening dress. If love is neither sex nor romance nor settled domesticity, it seems identifiable only in yearning

– necessitating in each character a constant state of pain. Love poetry provides Renata with a beatific ideal of devotion – "Only God could love her as much as he does," she declares dreamily as she shares Pushkin's poem 'I Loved You' with her class – but no blueprint for how to escape her own loneliness or manage her confused preoccupation with Marzena. In any case, the film could be said to argue that God's love provides a pretty weak example: in this cruel, cold-coloured world, God's treatment of his creations and the lover's behaviour towards the beloved are both as likely to cause suffering as to bring joy. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Piotr Kobus
Written by
Agnieszka Drewno
Director of Photography
Tomasz Wasilewski
Oleg Mutu
Edited by
Beata Walentowska
Production Designers
Katarzyna Sobanska
Marcel Slawinski
Sound
Christian Holm
Costume Designer
Monika Kaleta

@Manana SP Z.O.O.,
Telewizja Polska
S.A., Film Väst,
CommonGround
Pictures
Production Companies
Manana, Telewizja
Polska S.A.,
CommonGround
Pictures, Film Väst,
Polski Instytut
Sztuki Filmowej

A film by Tomasz
Wasilewski
Producer: Manana
Co-producers:
Telewizja Polska,
CommonGround
Pictures, Film Väst
Co-financed by
Polski Instytut
Sztuki Filmowej
Co-funded by the
Creative Europe
Programme of the
European Union

Cast
Julia Kijowska
Agata
Magdalena
Cielecka
Iza
Dorota Kolak
Renata
Marta
Nieradkiewicz
Marzena
Tomek Tyndyk
Adam
Andrzej Chyra
Karol
Lukasz Simlat

Jacek
Marcin Czarnik
Robert
Jedrzej Wielecki
Piotrek
Julia Chetnicka
Wiola, 'Wioletta'
Malgorzata
Majerska
Matgosia
Igor Bejnarowicz
Marek
Zuzanna Bernat
Marysia

In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Matchbox

Polish theatrical title
*Zjednoczone
stany miłości*

Poland, 1990. With the advent of parliamentary democracy, the news is dominated by political change. Dance teacher and former beauty queen Marzena, increasingly bored while her husband is away working in Western Europe, dreams of pursuing a future as a model. Meanwhile her friend and neighbour Agata, who works in the local video store, nurses an obsessive crush on her local priest, tires of her home life and is short with her husband and daughter as a result. Eventually, the priest appears to communicate a direct message to her through a sermon, telling her to give up her fixation on him. Agata attends a funeral conducted by the priest; also present is Marzena's older sister Iza, a high-school principal. Iza has been involved in a six-year affair with the dead woman's husband Karol, whose daughter Wiola is one of her pupils. After the funeral, Karol ends his relationship with Iza. Devastated by his rejection, Iza places a photograph of the two of them in Wiola's schoolbag. Karol comes to her home, punches her in the face, threatens to kill her and tries to goad her into suicide. At the railway station, Iza picks up and has sex with a stranger, who turns out to be a former pupil. She returns to school, collects Wiola and drives her into the countryside; after an emotional conversation (the content of which is inaudible), Wiola flees from her across a frozen lake. Renata, Marzena's neighbour and a teacher at the school, is fired by Iza. Alone in the flat she shares with her pet birds, Renata eavesdrops on Agata's fights with her husband, and becomes fixated on her minor encounters with Marzena. She sneaks into Marzena's aerobics and dance classes, and feigns an accident in order to spend time with her. She invites Marzena to have dinner with her in her apartment, but Marzena never comes. Marzena does a session with a photographer; when she passes out from drinking champagne, he strips her and masturbates over her body. Renata finds her unconscious, cleans the man's semen from her body and leaves again. Later, Marzena awakes, alone and still naked. She vomits.

The Accountant

USA 2016
Director: Gavin O'Connor
Certificate 15 127m 44s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

A truly bizarre film, Gavin O'Connor's *The Accountant* casts Ben Affleck as Christian Wolff, an ostensibly small-time CPA who is in reality a big-deal Mob associate with superhuman capabilities when it comes to crunching numbers and skulls. It's hard to recall another movie character conceived along these precise, *Ubervensch/Rain Man* lines: it's almost as if Affleck were trying to inhabit his buddy Matt Damon's roles in *Good Will Hunting* and *The Bourne Identity* simultaneously. The question of why Christian is so adept at solving complex mathematical equations is addressed early on in flashbacks that reveal a childhood diagnosis of autism; as to why he's effortlessly capable of taking down teams of heavily trained mercenaries with weapons ranging from a belt to anti-aircraft-grade artillery, well, Bill Dubuque's screenplay takes its sweet time getting there.

Now, it's not necessarily unenjoyable to watch a movie with a ridiculous premise and the confidence to unravel it at length: like its scrupulously task-driven hero, *The Accountant* is surely determined to give its paying customers their money's worth. If the film resembles any other recent big-star action vehicle, it's *Jack Reacher* (2012), with which it shares a certain two-fisted, po-faced, alpha-male sincerity and an almost fawning appreciation for the physique of its leading man (which was hilarious in *Jack Reacher*, where one scene was actually built around Tom Cruise posing with his shirt off). Whether or not Affleck is remotely convincing as a man on the spectrum of some kind of neurological disorder is less important to the movie's success than whether or not he's credibly hulking and intimidating, and he measures up on that count. In the scenes where Christian tentatively romances another, considerably less brilliant – and, unbeknown to her, mortally endangered – accountant, played by Anna Kendrick, he seems to be three times his co-star's size.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mark Williams
Lynette Howell Taylor
Written by
Bill Dubuque
Director of Photography
Seamus McGarvey
Edited by
Richard Pearson
Production Designer
Keith Cunningham
Music

Mark Isham
Supervising Sound Editor
Mark Mangini
Costumes Designed by
Nancy Steiner
Stunt Co-ordinators
Sam Hargrave
Fernando Chien

©Warner Bros.
Entertainment Inc.

and RatPac-Dune
Entertainment LLC
Production Companies
Warner Bros.
Pictures presents
an Electric City
Entertainment/Zero
Gravity Management
production in
association with
RatPac-Dune
Entertainment

A Gavin O'Connor film
Executive Producers
Gavin O'Connor
Jamie Patricof
Marty P. Ewing
Steven Mnuchin

Cast

Ben Affleck
Christian Wolff
Anna Kendrick
Dana Cummings

J.K. Simmons
Ray King
Jon Bernthal
Brax
Jeffrey Tambor
Francis Silverberg
Cynthia Addai-Robinson
Marybeth Medina
John Lithgow
Lamar Blackburn
Jean Smart
Rita Blackburn

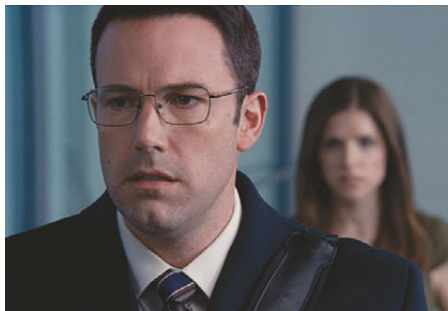
Andy Umberger
Ed Chilton
Alison Wright
Justine

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros. Pictures
International (UK)

Illinois, the present. Christian Wolff, a certified public accountant with Asperger syndrome, is also an associate of gangsters and criminals around the world, using his skills with numbers to launder their finances. The US Treasury, which knows Christian only through blurred surveillance photographs, sends analyst Marybeth Medina to try to uncover his identity. She determines that 'Christian Wolff' is one of several aliases, and that 'the accountant', as he's known, is also a dangerous killer. Meanwhile, Christian is hired by a robotics company to investigate the disappearance of \$60m in company funds. He concludes that company founder Lamar Blackburn was defrauded by his best friend and partner. The

latter is subsequently murdered by a mercenary, Brax, who makes the killing look like a suicide. Christian saves accountant Dana Cummings from a similar fate and takes her on the run, but can't act on his romantic feelings for her. Instead, he goes in search of Blackburn, deducing that he is behind the theft. After killing several bodyguards, he realises that Brax is in fact his own younger brother, who trained alongside him in childhood to be a killer at the behest of their military colonel father. Christian kills Blackburn while Brax watches. He disappears, though it is implied that in future he will help Marybeth solve financial crimes through his handler, an autistic woman who communicates through a supercomputer.



A dime to kill: Ben Affleck, Anna Kendrick

O'Connor, who directed the relatively enjoyable MMA weepie *Warrior* (2011), clearly buys into the story's big, broad themes of machismo and honour (duly explicated in a series of monologues, the best of which is, predictably, delivered by an Oscar-victory-lapping J.K. Simmons as a harried Treasury agent). But O'Connor doesn't have the idiosyncratic technique or imagination required to put across *The Accountant*'s vision of a sleekly corporatised comic-book universe, and he fails to disguise adequately the script's biggest twist. No hints, but anybody halfway paying attention will guess another major character's secret identity within minutes of his or her first appearance – a clear vindication of Roger Ebert's Law of Economy of Characters (which states that, since movie budgets make it impossible for any film to contain unnecessary characters, any 'mystery' person will always be the only character who seems otherwise extraneous).

It goes almost without saying that the film's treatment of autism and Asperger syndrome is problematic, but the very worst thing about *The Accountant* is not the way it exploits actual conditions, but its late-breaking and phony turn into a kind of public service announcement exhorting donations and support for research in the field. Such disingenuousness is the death of camp pleasure. **S**

American Pastoral

USA/Hong Kong 2016
Director: Ewan McGregor
Certificate 12A 108m 16s

Reviewed by Richard Combs

The narrator of *American Pastoral* emerges in the first scene to tell us where we are: at the 45th reunion of the 1951 class of Weequahic high school in Newark, New Jersey. He surveys the trophies and mementos of the most admired member of that class, all-round athlete and promising golden boy Seymour Levov (nicknamed 'the Swede' for his Nordic good looks in this predominantly Jewish community), before Swede's brother Jerry turns up to tell him that Swede has recently died and that his life didn't work out as expected. The narrator re-emerges in the last scene, at Swede's funeral, and ruminates on the way we always get people 'wrong', and that he was never more wrong than he was about "life showering blessings on Swede".

The narrator is Nathan Zuckerman, Philip Roth's alter ego in many novels, whose function in the original *American Pastoral* is to delve into the mystery of Swede's blandly imperturbable exterior, his all-encompassing goodwill. What he eventually discovers is that the apparent wholeness conceals a double life, a life that was broken in two when Swede's daughter Merry (Dakota Fanning), afflicted by a teenage stutter, turned her disorder outwards, identifying with the radical anti-establishment politics of the 1960s and committing acts of terrorism and murder.

But the mistake Zuckerman makes with Swede – thinking that the affable exterior is the truth, that there is no interior – becomes a lesson he learns about everyone: there is no single truth; doubleness is all and chaos the ruling principle. Screenwriter John Romano and first-time director Ewan McGregor have served this fairly – up to a point. The point is the failure of their Zuckerman (David Strathairn) to become more than a narrative holding device, usefully bookending the story, rather than a character as painfully involved in its dynamics as Swede himself. Roth in a way sinks his narrator into his main character, so that the chaos of life can be seen as a mix of judicious third-person commentary and Swede's bewildered first-person experience.

Because Swede is now a more contained and – in McGregor's straightforward performance – integrated figure, the disorder and Roth's apocalyptic energy have gone. Or rather, the



Golden boy: Ewan McGregor

Burn Burn Burn

United Kingdom 2015
Director: Chanya Button
Certificate 15 105m 4s

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Director Chanya Button has worked exclusively with female writers: her three short films were scripted by Sian Robins-Grace, and her next project, now in production, is an adaptation of Eileen Atkins's play *Vita & Virginia*. *Burn Burn Burn* – a comedy-drama starring Chloe Pirrie, who impressed in the independent film *Shell* (2012), and *Downton Abbey*'s Laura Carmichael – is the debut feature of both Button and actress-turned-writer Charlie Covell, whose credits include the Russell T. Davies-created series *Banana*.

It's not beyond the realms of possibility that this screenplay began life as a television script. The premise – two young women, tasked with scattering their dead friend's ashes, travel to four UK locations – is inherently episodic. Sandwich these four stop-offs between set-up and wrap-up episodes and you've got a six-part series. Certainly, *Burn Burn Burn*, with its gallows humour and focus on twentysomethings, has a feel of BBC Three. (In one scene, Alex, the more introverted of the two, opens her heart to friend Seph while strapped to a theatre-prop cross, because she is standing in for a feckless Christ in an amdrum Passion play.)

Encompassing sexual frankness and sadness stemming from loss, *Burn Burn Burn* brings to mind Phoebe Waller-Bridge's up-close-and-personal *Fleabag*, first shown by BBC Three in July. Like that sitcom, Button's film wants to be confronting and to hold up a mirror to a (young, middle-class, apathetic) percentage of the population. But Alex and Seph aren't as interesting as *Fleabag*, perhaps because the film's allowance of eccentricities is stretched across the two of them. The would-be candid dialogue – Seph admitting that she's "had sex out of politeness" many times – doesn't cut it given the bolder, bluer black comedy on the British small screen.

But this is a film and it does look like one, capably shot and lit, be it Highlands vista or vehicle interior in the frame. Alex and Seph's interactions with the virtual Dan – their late friend, who dispenses instructions via pre-recorded video – are nicely handled. The plot,



Ash landing: Chloe Pirrie, Laura Carmichael

however, is overstuffed. The first act is bitty with establishing scenes – the funeral, an infidelity, the loss of a job and so on – leaving the film's affective story beats crowded into the latter half. There are three summits to this second act: the renewal of Seph and Alex's friendship after a falling-out; hitchhiker Diana's cathartic reunion with her veterinarian son and the introspection it inspires in the women; and the one-two punch of the landscapes of Ben Lomond and Dan's valedictory dispatch, in which, at last, he lets down his guard.

Character development, such as Dan's breakthrough, is the film's greatest strength. The interior lives of the friends sustain interest, while what's on the outside can be off-putting. Pirrie gets a raw deal, needing to play downcast and snappish for so long before revealing the reason. Meanwhile Dan's singsong intonation, though not unrealistic, wears after a time (though it is Dan, *not* Jack Farthing, who is actorly in his speech patterns – it's even plausible that Dan's affectations were built into the character in order to make his last dispatch, affection-free, all the more poignant). Not one of Covell's characters is unqualifiedly likeable, but all will probably win over the viewer before the film's conclusion. **S**

balance of disorder falls, awkwardly, elsewhere. The 'doubleness' that Roth's Zuckerman eventually discovers in Swede is better exemplified in the film by his wife Dawn (Jennifer Connelly). Before her marriage, she goes through a cross-examination by Swede's father – a kind of horse-trading over what elements of Jewish and Catholic religious life will be incorporated in any child's upbringing. After her breakdown over Merry, Dawn opts for a facelift – "to become a new woman" – and has a 'mad' scene in which she dances on the shopfloor of the Newark Maid glove factory in her Miss New Jersey outfit.

All she wanted, she bitterly tells her husband, was to be a music teacher, but he pushed her into competing for Miss America: "You made me a princess." Since Swede never seems divided in this way, the film can't reach for the vision of a family – and a nation – divided that Roth summarises in the last section of his novel, 'Paradise Lost'. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tom Rosenberg
Gary Lucchesi
Andre Lamal
Screenplay
John Romano
Based on the novel
by Philip Roth
Director of
Photography
Martin Ruhe
Edited by
Melissa Kent
Production
Designer
Daniel B. Clancy
Music
Alexandre Desplat
Sound Mixer
Chris Strollo
Costume Designer
Lindsay Ann McKay

@Lakeshore
Entertainment
Group LLC and Lions
Gate Films Inc.
Production
Companies
Lionsgate and

Lakeshore
Entertainment
present a Lakeshore
Entertainment
Lionsgate production
Presented in
association with TIK
(Hong Kong) Films
Executive
Producers
Eric Reid
Terry A. McKay

Cast
Ewan McGregor
Seymour Levov,
'the Swede'
Jennifer Connelly
Dawn Levov
Dakota Fanning
Merry Levov
Peter Riegert
Lou Levov
Rupert Evans
Jerry Levov
Uzo Aduba
Vicky
Molly Parker
Dr Sheila Smith

Valorie Curry
Rita Cohen
Hannah Nordberg
Merry Levov aged 12
Julia Silverman
Sylvia Levov
Mark Hildreth
Agent Dolan
Samantha Mathis
Penny Hamlin
David Strathairn
Nathan Zuckerman
David Whalen
William Orcutt, 'Bill'

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Entertainment Film
Distributors Ltd

Newark, New Jersey, 1996. At the 45th reunion of his high-school class at Weequahic high school, author Nathan Zuckerman hears that the school's sporting hero, Seymour 'Swede' Levov, has recently died; the latter's brother Jerry tells Nathan what became of Swede's promising life.

Swede takes over his father Lou's glove factory, Newark Maid, and marries the Catholic Dawn Dwyer, winner of the Miss New Jersey beauty contest. She and Swede have a daughter, Merry, and Dawn takes up cattle breeding. But Merry develops a stutter and rages against the US over the Vietnam War. She disappears in 1968 after blowing up the local general store, killing the owner.

Swede is contacted by Rita Cohen, who claims to know Merry and tells him that she totally rejects her family. Dawn suffers a breakdown; she has a facelift in order to begin a new life in a new home, designed by William Orcutt (with whom, Swede later learns, she is having an affair). Rita extorts \$10,000 from Swede, but he forces her to reveal that Merry is living in a derelict section of Newark. Merry has joined an extreme ascetic cult and has since killed three more people. Although Merry refuses to return home, Swede keeps up a tireless watch on her retreat. Zuckerman attends Swede's funeral, at which Merry also appears.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Tim Phillips
Chanya Button
Daniel-Konrad Cooper
Written by
Charlie Covell
Based on an original
idea by Charlie Covell,
Chanya Button
Director of
Photography
Carlos de Carvalho
Editor
Mark Trend
Production Designer
Noam Piper
Music
Marc Canham
Candy Says
Sound Mixer
Daniel-Chu Owen
Costume Designer
Sophie Monro-Pruett

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Productions Ltd

Production
Companies
Creative England,
Young Button
Productions and
Rather Good
Films present
Executive Producer
Richard Holmes

Cast
Laura Carmichael
Seph
Chloe Pirrie
Alex
Joe Dempsie
James
Jack Farthing
Dan
Alice Lowe
Davina
Julian Rhind-Tutt
Adam
Sally Phillips
Ingrid

Jane Asher
Amelia
Nigel Planer
Henry
Matthew Kelly
Doug
Alison Steadman
Diana

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Verve Pictures

UK, present day. At Dan's funeral, his friends Seph and Alex discover that he has tasked them with scattering his ashes in four locations. When Alex catches her girlfriend cheating and Seph is fired from her nanny job, the two agree to undertake the road trip. At each location they must watch a video message pre-recorded by Dan. The pair are prevented from scattering ashes at Glastonbury Abbey, but a tour guide agrees to take a jarful into her custody. They attend a barn party; the next day, they give their talkative host a lift but abandon him at a petrol station. They scatter some ashes at the Cardiff nightclub where Dan lost his virginity. Seph, doubting her commitment to boyfriend James, has a one-night stand. The girls scatter ashes in York. James proposes to Seph; she accepts and then quarrels about this with Alex, who says she is deluding James. Alex confides in Seph that her younger sister Amy was killed by a car while in her care. Reconciled, the girls help hitchhiker Diana reunite with her estranged son. Seph breaks off her engagement. At Ben Lomond, she and Alex scatter Dan's remaining ashes, honouring his request to keep some back for his mother.

Chi-Raq

USA 2015
Director: Spike Lee
Certificate 15 126m 45s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Spike Lee's *Chi-Raq* is premised on a piece of pure audacity, transposing Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, a 2,400-year-old Greek comedy about women launching a sex strike that drives their belligerent husbands and lovers to call off the Peloponnesian War, to the setting of contemporary South Side Chicago. Lee is returning to the imperative, agitprop mode of his epochal *Do the Right Thing*, with the onetime Mister Señor Love Daddy Samuel L. Jackson back playing the role of bombastic Greek chorus, officially this time. So rightly celebrated is Lee's 1989 movie, and so beyond reproach the lessons his latest film didactically imparts – in brief, gun violence in the US is a scourge, especially in black communities – that there's a temptation to give it the benefit of the doubt, to overlook that it's a tone-deaf, smug, slapdash, out-of-touch, mirthless and completely misbegotten mess which gives further proof, should any be needed, that Lee has lost his bearings as an artist.

Lee is far from his native Brooklyn, Bucktown, Bed-Stuy-Do-Or-Die here. Sometimes a change of scenery can be a welcome agent of creative renewal, and Chicago is a city that seems constantly to be in the national news these days. Donald Trump loves to talk about it, because it defies the overall decades-long pattern of improved violent-crime statistics in the US and reinforces his depiction of the country's inner cities as war zones in need of stop-and-frisk martial law and a strongman leader. Opportunists love a catastrophe.

In Lee's retelling, the Spartans and Trojans are street gangs led by Chi-Raq (Nick Cannon) and Cyclops (Wesley Snipes), and it's Chi-Raq's girlfriend Lysistrata (Teyonah Parris) who leads women on both sides to withhold carnal access to these fool men – “If he should force me to lay on that conjugal couch/I will refuse his stroke and not give up that nappy pouch,” per the screenplay, written in rhyming verse by Lee and Kevin Willmott, which unfortunately doesn't get much better than that.

The neighbourhood-as-theatre premise organically developed in *Do the Right Thing* has here become an unwieldy conceptual burden, a gimmick that, having been decided on, has to be dragged all the way to the finish line. Lee has always had something of the comic-book artist about him, and his garish, colour-coded version of war-zone Chicago at times recalls the Walter Hill of *Streets of Fire* (1984) or *The Warriors* (1979) – the latter drawn from Xenophon's *Anabasis*. This approach isn't necessarily wrong-headed – Lee's not pretending to make a street-level documentary about Chicago (though if you're looking for that, check out Steve James's *The Interrupters*, 2011). But it takes an awfully steady hand at the tiller to move between lowbrow comedy and moments of attempted pathos such as a mother (Jennifer Hudson) weeping while scrubbing her dead child's blood off the pavement.

Lee is hardly able to hit a single register in *Chi-Raq*, much less toggle between tragic breast-beating and slapstick. Lysistrata's clunky sneak-attack seduction of General King Kong (David Patrick Kelly), the Confederate-flag-briefs-wearing commander of the Illinois National



For better or worse: Teyonah Parris

Guard armoury, is the least funny thing I'd seen in years, and retained that honour until the arrival of a bit with D.B. Sweeney's Rahm Emanuel-substitute mayor warming up for the boudoir in a pharaoh costume. Ostensible sex farce, *Chi-Raq* is remarkable in its inability to find laughs in sex, though this isn't for lack of laborious effort, capped by Lysistrata and Chi-Raq's semi-public erotic face-off – a staple of counterculture comedies such as *The Groove Tube* which was stale in 1974.

Nothing, but nothing, works here. Cannon and Snipes are both too old to be running teen crews. Snipes at least seems to be entertaining himself by playing with a Mike Tyson impersonation, while Cannon fails to suggest the frightened boy beneath his muscled exterior. The whole endeavour is so cockeyed and cattywampus that John Cusack

as a priest in Afrocentric garb exhorting his all-black congregation to help silence the violence is actually the least of its problems.

Chi-Raq is now Lee's third straight feature to be adapted from another artist's work, following *Oldboy* (2013), from Park Chan-wook's film of the same name, and *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus* (2014), a bowdlerisation of *Ganja & Hess* (1973), a deeply personal masterpiece by Bill Gunn, an artist who still hasn't had his proper due. Lee, by contrast, has had more than his share, and his latest is what total imposture and artistic stagnation look like. It's Chris Rock talking about having to cash a cheque for under \$20. It's Jerry Seinfeld making jokes about flying coach. *Chi-Raq*'s tone of klaxon stridency speaks of a desperate need for intervention, but the emergency that's most urgently felt here belongs to Lee – not the city of Chicago. 📌

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Spike Lee
Written by
Kevin Willmott
Spike Lee
Director of Photography
Matthew Libatique
Editors
Ryan Denmark
Hye Mee Na
Production Design
Alex DiGerlando
Music Score
Terence Blanchard
Sound Design
Phil Stockton
Costume Design
Ruth E. Carter
Choreography
Majia Garcia

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Production Companies
Amazon Studios presents a 40 Acres and a Mule Filmworks

production
A Spike Lee joint
Executive Producers
Jon Kilik
Kevin Willmott

Cast
Nick Cannon
Demetrius Dupree, 'Chi-Raq'
Wesley Snipes
Cyclops
Teyonah Parris
Lysistrata
Jennifer Hudson
Irene
Steve Harris
Old Duke
Harry Lennix
Commissioner Blades
D.B. Sweeney
Mayor Mccloud
Angela Bassett
Miss Helen
John Cusack
Father Mike Corridan
Samuel L. Jackson
Dolmedes

David Patrick Kelly
Major King Kong

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Vertigo Films

Chicago South Side, present day. Gang violence between the Spartans, led by Chi-Raq, and the Trojans, led by Cyclops, is escalating. The day after a nightclub shooting, a little girl becomes the latest innocent bystander to be killed. Retaliation follows retaliation, and the home of Chi-Raq's girlfriend Lysistrata is burned down. She moves in with her neighbour Helen, who proposes a solution to the violence: withhold sex from the menfolk until they agree to peace. Lysistrata puts Helen's proposal to the women of the Trojans, and they all take a vow of chastity. Led by Lysistrata, they seize the Illinois National Guard armoury without a shot fired. As the strike spreads, it affects not only the gang members but also a group of black civic leaders called the Knights of Euphrates, and even local government. After a failed attempt to seduce the women with romantic songs, Chi-Raq and Lysistrata agree to meet in bed: whoever is the first to come will surrender. However, they are interrupted by Cyclops and a coalition of wounded warriors throwing down their arms. Chi-Raq is initially unconvinced but, surrounded by the grieving mothers of innocent victims, he confesses that it was his bullet that killed the little girl, and marches off to prison.

Creepy

Japan 2016

Director: Kurosawa Kiyoshi

See Feature
on page 36

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Kurosawa Kiyoshi's *Creepy* is full of lures, snares and ambushes, as befits a suspense movie, but what sets it apart from the average run of thrillers

is how willingly its characters walk into them. Detectives investigating the home of the film's hidden-in-plain-sight villain, the mysterious Mr Nishino (Kagawa Teruyuki), don't do so with their sidearms drawn, but instead politely announce themselves while slipping their shoes off at the door, like so many flies accepting the spider's invitation to enter his parlour. Again and again we see characters taking their eyes off the proverbial ball, waltzing towards an imminent threat with false confidence, and paying the price.

The first time this happens is in a prologue of sorts, in which Takakura Koichi (Nishijima Hidetoshi), a police specialist in criminal psychology trying to talk down a serial killer who has taken a hostage, turns his back on the psychopath as a signal of trust, and is promptly stabbed in the spine with a fork. We next encounter Koichi a year later, in the Tokyo suburb of Inagi, where he has just moved with his wife Yasuko (Takeuchi Yuko), having left the force to take a teaching job – though his retirement doesn't stop him nosing into an unsolved missing-persons case from six years earlier when a colleague reminds him of it.

Moving between these two entirely separate spheres of Koichi's life – his work and extracurricular sleuthing, and his home life with Yasuko – provides Kurosawa with a clean structure for his film's first couple of acts. But as Koichi confesses, "I always confuse work with personal interests," so the hobby-investigation with which he whiles away his idle hours leads right to his own front door – specifically, to his neighbour Nishino. (Kagawa is the whole show, playing the part with ineffable strangeness, his glassy-eyed carp-like features usually arranged in a cold deadpan but even more unnerving when they assume the appearance of a neighbourly friendliness ignorant of the most basic social cues.)

Kurosawa has himself spent most of the past decade away from 'home' – that is, away from the psychological thrillers such as *Cure* (1997), *Charisma* (2000) and *Pulse* (2001) with which he established his international reputation during the brief period when 'J-horror' was trading high on the market – and so *Creepy* may be regarded as a return of sorts. Here he is working from a novel by the well-regarded author Maekawa Yutaka, and part of the pleasure in what he has made of it comes in seeing how he manages to effectively draw out a mystery that isn't really much of a mystery at all: we're only presented with one really valid suspect in the person of Nishino, and the crosscutting of the investigative and domestic scenes makes their eventual collision seem only a matter of time.

The destination may be inevitable, but the trip there is never less than compelling, thanks in no small part to Kurosawa's awareness of the widescreen frame and his tensile wielding of classical *mise en scène*, which is about as easy to find today as good blacksmithing. Of particular note is a cross-examination scene in which Koichi tries to drag details out of the lone, befuddled survivor of



Into the maze: Nishijima Hidetoshi, Takeuchi Yuko

one of Nishino's earlier sprees, which in a little over six minutes, five cuts and three intricately blocked sequence shots makes unshowy, meaningful use of shadowplay and background detail, moving back and forth from light to dark, from disturbed interiority to a recollection of the world outside.

The note of banality in *Creepy*'s central mystery is part of what gets under the skin, along with the verdant, downright pleasant summertime atmospherics and the baffling idea that someone like Nishino, defined by his

very absence of personality, would be able to bend people to his will, even with the help of the mysterious sedative drug that he uses, the exact function of which is one of several plot items deliberately left to the imagination. One bit of business that is quite explicitly clear is that Nishino, an old hand at this game, prefers to set up shop and do his dirty business from homes in cul-de-sacs, a detail quite appropriate to Kurosawa's overall design – for he has constructed here a maze of nothing but dead ends. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Osumi Tadashi
Written by
Kurosawa Kiyoshi
Based on the novel
by Maekawa Yutaka
Cinematographer
Akiko Ashizawa
Editor
Koichi Takahashi

Production Designer
Ataka Norifumi
Music
Yuri Habuka
Sound
Mikisuke Shimadzu
Costume Designers
Kana Maruyama
Satoko Sato

© 'Creepy' Film
Partners
**Production
Companies**
'Creepy' Film
Partners: Shochiku,
Kinoshita Group,
Asmik Ace, Kobunsha,
Asahi Shimbun, KDDI
Executive Producer

Kota Kurota

Cast
Nishijima Hidetoshi
Takakura Koichi
Takeuchi Yuko
Yasuko
Kawaguchi Haruna
Honda Saki

Higashide Masahiro
Nogami
Kagawa Teruyuki
Nishino
Fujino Ryoko
Mio
Sasano Takashi
Tanimoto
In Colour

[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Eureka
Entertainment Ltd

Tokyo and its environs, the present. Koichi, a police officer specialising in criminal psychology, is wounded when a serial killer briefly escapes his custody. A year later, he has retired from the force, and is teaching at a local university, living in the suburbs with his wife Yasuko. As Yasuko makes the acquaintance of their new neighbours, including the strange, socially maladroït Nishino and his teenage daughter Mio, Koichi is drawn back to police work, particularly a cold case concerning a family who disappeared six years earlier, leaving their daughter behind. Interrogating the survivor and returning to the scene of the crime, Koichi discovers five bodies on the premises of a neighbouring family's abandoned house. He is searching for the killer when Mio informs him that Nishino isn't her real father. This prompts Koichi

to call in a favour from an old friend on the force, who goes to look in on Nishino and is subsequently killed in a mysterious gas explosion. Now suspecting Nishino's involvement in the disappearances, Koichi intensifies his investigation, while oblivious to the fact that Yasuko has fallen under the spell of 'Nishino' – who is in fact an imposter who has stolen the real Nishino's identity and has been keeping captive the family who's home he has moved into, finally disposing of them with Mio's help. Discovering too late what has been happening, Koichi also falls under Nishino's power when attempting to rescue Yasuko, only to be betrayed by his wife. Before Nishino can start over with this new 'family', Koichi shakes off the spell long enough to shoot him dead. Traumatized, Koichi and Yasuko face an uncertain future.

The Darkest Universe

United Kingdom 2016
Directors: Tom Kingsley, Will Sharpe
Certificate 15 86m 53s

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

The Bafta-nominated directors of 2011's dark comedy *Black Pond* return with another quirky, unsettling look at 21st-century life. Will Sharpe, who co-wrote and co-directed, also stars as Zac, a successful city type who is frustrated by his dreamy sister's hopeless lack not just of ambition but of any basic desire to earn a living or fend for herself. In her turn, his sister Alice (Tiani Ghosh, who also co-wrote) can't understand why Zac gets so stressed about rent and bills, despite the fact that he is bankrolling her extended sabbatical from adult responsibility. The film cleverly sets up this binary relationship before deftly undermining it as the narrative progresses: control-freak Zac is thrown into a world of chaos when Alice disappears with her new boyfriend Toby (Joe Thomas); and Alice, whose fatalistic attitude to life seems at first to be so ill-suited to long-term survival, begins to look refreshingly adaptable in comparison with Zac's rigidity and pessimism.

Reeling from the sudden end of his own relationship with girlfriend Eva (Sophia Di Martino), Zac gives up his old life to search for Alice full-time along the canal networks where he last saw her. Much of the film is made up of his erratically framed and sometimes incoherent video blogs, which he posts on social media in an attempt to gain publicity for his search, and the film intercuts this increasingly frantic footage with sophisticated surrealist sequences referencing smoke, water, tunnels and the natural world, as if to emphasise that a change of focus and priority is taking place on a level Zac can hardly perceive. These hallucinatory interludes (dreamily shot by cinematographer Will Hanke) are comically offset by the crunching banality of the conversations Zac has with police, witnesses and eventually with Toby's father (Chris Langham) and brother Charlie (Raph Shirley), who accompanies Zac for part of the trip. It is through Charlie's eyes that we begin to appreciate how quickly Zac's personality is unravelling: what started as the natural concern of a caring brother soon begins to look like a full-blown existential crisis.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jo-Jo Ellison
Tom Kingsley
Will Sharpe
Written by
Tiani Ghosh
Will Sharpe
Director of
Photography

Will Hanke
Edited by
Tom Kingsley
Will Sharpe
Music
Raleigh Long
Arthur Sharpe
Sound Recordist
Edwin Weiss

©The Darkest
Universe Ltd

Cast
Will Sharpe
Zac Pratt
Tiani Ghosh
Alice

Joe Thomas
Toby
Sophia Di Martino
Eva
Raph Shirley
Charlie
Chris Langham
Alan
Sharon D Clarke

Megan
Ewan Bailey
Robbie
Helen Cripps
Lucy
Jamie Demetriou
Jack
Simon Bird
Adrian

Jonny Sweet
Howard

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Miracle Films

London, present day. Zac Pratt is on a mission to find his missing sister Alice, whom he last saw on a narrowboat heading west along the Regent's Canal. Through a series of disjointed flashbacks, we piece together the story of the siblings' relationship: since the death of their mother, the dreamy Alice has relied entirely on her brother for financial support, at first living with him and his girlfriend Eva in their Islington flat, then moving out to a narrowboat nearby, which he resentfully pays for even after Alice gets a part-time job. However, when Alice meets and falls in love with Toby, she begins to find her feet; Zac is forced to accept that she is no longer



Gone girl: Tiani Ghosh, Joe Thomas

With such disparate elements fused together with non-sequential flashbacks filling in Zac and Alice's backstories, this is an ambitiously structured film that could easily have fallen to pieces in less capable hands. As it is, Sharpe and his co-director Tom Kingsley pull it all together with wit and confidence, and deliver an entertaining and thought-provoking 90 minutes, which carefully balance Zac's heartfelt anguish with the inherent absurdity of his proposed solution to it. They are helped by a talented cast who handle what looks like a semi-improvised script with aplomb; Ghosh and Thomas, in particular, delineate the contours of their characters' childish wonder with a necessary restraint that saves them, and the film, from tooth-rotting sweetness. At times, the whole thing threatens to succumb to an awareness of its own cleverness, but there is real bite in its central revelation that control – of life, of other people, even of yourself – is largely a fragile illusion. 🍷

under his control. Even so, when Alice and Zac leave the Islington mooring and set off on an adventure together, Zac reports them missing, and when the police investigation grinds to a halt he begins his own quest to find them. Via a video blog and an accompanying social-media campaign, he presents himself as a caring brother desperately worried about his sister's wellbeing; it gradually becomes clear, however, that Alice is not missing at all, but has merely decided to go her own way. Zac's obsessive search is really therapy for his own mental-health crisis. He may never find Alice, but his extended road trip has given his own unravelling life a sense of purpose.

Dog Eat Dog

Director: Paul Schrader
Certificate 18 93m 15s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

In introducing *Dog Eat Dog* at this year's Cannes festival, where it was screened as the closing film in the Directors' Fortnight, Paul Schrader urged his audience, "Don't take it too seriously." You can't help thinking that, had the film not had Schrader's still (relatively) respected name attached to it, no one would have dreamt of taking it seriously for a second. A cartoonish farrago of crime-movie clichés, disconnected plot elements, random gratuitous violence, flashy stylistic ostentation and thespian showboating, it plays out like something Quentin Tarantino and Guy Ritchie might have scrawled illegibly on the back of an envelope after an evening of drug-fuelled excess. Over the years, reviewers have often detected the influence of Schrader's Calvinist upbringing in his work as writer, as in *Taxi Driver* (1976) or *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), and as director, in *Blue Collar* (1978), for example, or *Affliction* (1997). They might be hard put to unearth any theological underpinnings in *Dog Eat Dog*.

Which isn't to say that the movie doesn't provide, for much of its fairly brief running time, a good deal of low-rent fun. For a start, it's rare to see Nicolas Cage at full throttle outgunned by anyone else on screen, but in this film Willem Dafoe – as wild-eyed, droopy-tached 'Mad Dog' McCain – has him beat five ways to Sunday. Even before the pre-credit sequence is over, Mad Dog has totalled a baby-pink wall-phone in a hissy fit, frenziedly stabbed his gargantuan ex-girlfriend to death because she won't let him stay the night, then chased her teenage daughter upstairs and shot her through the head just for the hell of it. Later on Mad Dog is granted two minutes of close-up to pull deranged faces at himself in a distorting mirror. Eventually, heading off with fellow lowlife Diesel (Christopher Matthew Cook) to dispose of a body in a disused coastguard station (where he's already dumped the ex-girlfriend and her daughter), he keeps up such a relentless yammer of obsessive self-recrimination that Diesel finally shoots him dead just to shut him up. Beside this shameless grandstanding, Cage (whose would-be mastermind Troy intermittently provides voiceover narration) is at risk of seeming almost restrained.

Still, just to redress the balance, in a final shootout sequence that makes so little narrative sense it's perhaps best regarded as the hallucinations of a dying brain, Cage does get to do his Humphrey Bogart imitation. Like so much else in *Dog Eat Dog* – including black-and-white interludes in various strip-joints, a pixellated sequence in psychedelic colours and a late-entry flashback to some semi-naked ketchup-and-mustard squeeze-bottle horseplay between the three principals – this seems to have been thrown in with scant regard for dramatic logic, or indeed any other kind of logic. We also get to see Schrader himself making his onscreen acting debut as gravel-voiced mob boss El Greco. It seems that he only took the role after it had been turned down by several others, including Michael Douglas, Martin Scorsese, Jeff Goldblum and Rupert Everett. Maybe they'd read the script.

Said script, the work of Matthew Wilder – adapted from the 1995 novel by former career

The Dreamed Ones

Austria 2016

Director: Ruth Beckermann

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

Little was known of the relationship between Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan, two of the most important German-language poets (though not German) of the past century, until the publication of their letters to one another in 2008. Their correspondence revealed an unlikely friendship. Born in Czernowitz, Bukovina, a then thriving cultural centre, Celan was a Jew whose parents had died in the Nazi death camps. She, meanwhile, had been raised in a middle-class family in Austria, the daughter of a Nazi party member. When they first met in Vienna in 1948, Celan was already a highly regarded poet. Bachmann, six years his junior, was still writing her doctoral thesis on Heidegger, yet to find her own literary voice. They would spend only a few months together before Celan left for Paris, but from the encounter would spring a 20-year correspondence: one that was passionate and fraught with the tensions of the post-war era. After their first meeting Celan sent Bachmann a poem, in which he summons the spirits of ancient Jewesses to bless this nascent relationship between a stateless Jew and his Gentile lover, to "Adorn her with the pain for Ruth, for Miriam and Noemie".

This poem, 'In Egypt', opens Ruth Beckermann's *The Dreamed Ones*, an intimate, elliptical marriage of fiction and documentary. The first lines are read aloud by an unnamed actor (a mesmeric delivery by Austrian thespian Laurence Rupp), while the camera lingers on the sculpted face of a young woman (Anja Plaschg, who performs in Austria's alternative music scene as Soap&Skin). The pair are recording Celan and Bachmann's letters for radio. The location is Vienna's renowned Funkhaus, but we don't realise this for some time, since for the first seven minutes of the film we see nothing but the faces of these actors, in close-up, as they read.

Positioned at microphones facing one another, these actors close the distance that separated Bachmann and Celan, yet the gap between them still feels boundless. Each scrutinises the other's face for signs of a long-delayed response, Dieter Pichler's masterful editing collapsing a lifetime of correspondence into a 90-minute conversation. As Rupp and Plaschg read, DP Johannes Hammel's handheld camera seems to breathe with them. It is as if they are possessed by the poet lovers. When Plaschg reads a letter from Bachmann excusing herself for a missed encounter, Rupp's lip curls into the suggestion of a sneer, eyes hooded with contempt. Plaschg herself seems evasive, upset: her eyes downcast and teary. Eventually she asks for a break.

The pauses between readings both trouble and redouble the bleeding of actor into character. As they smoke, share a meal and chat, in a series of mostly unscripted encounters, the conversation is often banal; yet a curious tension arises between the actors. At one point Plaschg drapes herself across a lip-shaped sofa. On another occasion the pair lie perpendicular to one another the floor, listening to James Brown. Rupp jokes that maybe theirs will be "a terrific collaboration in the end". Both relationships, however, are but briefly glimpsed, full of allusions we can't understand, references



Good cop, mad cop: Nicolas Cage, Willem Dafoe

criminal Edward Bunker, who came to fame playing Mr Blue in *Reservoir Dogs* (1991) – has been described by Schrader as "beautifully manic", which is at least 50 per cent true. If anything, the film only loses traction in its less manic moments, as in a middle section where the three ex-cons try to connect with women. Troy offers to fly a hooker to Nice, but she's less than dazzled as she's never heard of the place; a Japanese hooker gives Mad Dog an unconsummated hand-job ("This takes forever!" she complains); and Diesel chats up an attractive (and seemingly non-commercial) woman in a hotel bar, only to scare her off with

his unhinged behaviour. If this is aimed at pathos it misses the mark, since we've been given no reason to care about these caricatures and their emotional hang-ups. Rather more diverting are the film's blatantly farcical moments, such as the trio got up in Halloween-style cop uniforms and riding in a saloon with 'POLICE' scotch-taped to its flanks in erratically applied block capitals.

In briefing his creative team, Schrader has recalled, he told them, "We can make any damn film we want... The only thing forbidden is to be boring." In this at least he has very largely succeeded. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Mark Earl Burman
Gary Hamilton
Brian Beckman
David Hilary
Screenplay
Matthew Wilder
Based on the novel
by Edward Bunker
Director of
Photography
Alexander Dynan
Edited by
Benjamin
Rodriguez Jr
Production Designer

Grace Yun
Music Composed by
We Are Dark Angels
Sound
Thorn Shafer
Costume Designer
Olga Mill
Stunt Co-ordinator
Richard Fike
Production
Companies
Blue Budgie Films
presents a Mark Earl
Burman production
in association with

ArcLight Films
International,
Pure Dopamine,
Ingenious Media and
Shanghai Gigantic
Pictures Co., Ltd
A Paul Schrader film
Executive Producers
Jeremy Rosen
Jeff Caperton
Barney Burman
Ray Mansfield
Shaun Redick
Donald Rivers
Michael McClung
Tim Pernel

Cast
Nicolas Cage
Troy
Willem Dafoe
John McCain,
'Mad Dog'
Christopher
Matthew Cook
Diesel
Louisa Krause
Zoe
Omar Dorsey
Moon Man
Melissa Bolona
Lina

Rey Gallegos
Chepe
Chelcie Melton
Sheila
Paul Schrader
El Greco
Louis Perez
Mike Brennan,
'Jose Vasquez'
Magi Avila
Carmen
Dolby Digital
In Colour and
Black & White
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Signature
Entertainment

Cleveland, present day. Ex-con John McCain, known as Mad Dog, stabs his ex-girlfriend to death when she refuses to let him spend the night, and shoots dead her teenage daughter. He meets up with two fellow ex-cons, Troy and Diesel, whom he met in jail. Since they're all short of cash, Troy (assuming the role of leader) contacts a Mafia boss, El Greco, who points them towards Moon Man, a drug dealer they can shake down. Posing as police officers, they arrest him at gunpoint; they take his drugs stash, but have to leave without his cash when the local residents start attacking them.

El Greco comes up with a more lucrative job. Fellow mobster Chepe is owed \$4m by rival gangster Mike Brennan. Troy and his cohorts are to abduct Mike's one-year-old baby; for this they'll earn \$750,000.

Mike, they're told, will be away when they invade his house. They find the child with his nanny Carmen, but a man arrives and Mad Dog shoots him. The man's wallet identifies him as Jose Vasquez. Troy and the others lock Carmen and the child in a deserted house. El Greco tells Troy that 'Vasquez' was in fact Brennan – he says he'll try to square things with Chepe, who's furious. Mad Dog and Diesel take Brennan's body to a deserted coastguard station where Mad Dog has already dumped the bodies of his ex-girlfriend and her daughter. Diesel, wearying of Mad Dog's self-pitying monologue, shoots him dead. Troy and Diesel get into a shootout with police in a supermarket car park; Diesel is shot dead, Troy is beaten up and dragged behind a police car. Later, Troy hijacks a couple and, in a further shootout, is shot dead along with them.



The weight of the past: Anja Plaschg, Laurence Rupp

to conversations we haven't heard, books and reviews we haven't read. There is a terrible row between Celan and Bachmann over a family heirloom that features only in snatches and is so divisive that it splits the soundtrack from the image itself, as we watch Plaschg out of character, alone and smoking, out of character while her off-screen voice reads Bachmann's words. Celan pleads for a response, yet all he receives is the same repeated phrase: "Are we the dreamed ones?" Is this Bachmann's repetition? Or Plaschg's? Or is it a clever trick of Beckermann's?

A respected political film-essayist, Beckermann is the child of Jewish Holocaust survivors and her previous films have all, after a fashion, explored the construction of history, the legacy of the Shoah and questions of migration and diaspora. This first foray into fiction might seem at first a departure but both Celan and Bachmann experience the push-pull of homeland and the ramifications of WWII in their separate ways. Their correspondence

offers an elegant rebuke to Adorno's interdiction on poetry after Auschwitz, but also a biting commentary on the politics of the age. For Bachmann, Vienna is a "hotbed of half measures where one must be careful not to lose one's intellectual bearings". The barb travels down the centuries, finding an echo in Plaschg's comment that her fellow musicians are talented but mediocre, sharing "a do-as-you're-told mentality".

Apart from a brief spell in Paris, Celan and Bachmann never lived together. He married the graphic artist Gisèle de Lestrang; she took up with the Swiss writer Max Frisch (the semi-autobiographical novel she wrote subsequently, *Malina*, was filmed in 1991 by Werner Schroeter, with Isabel Huppert as Bachmann's alter-ego). Still, their protracted longing for one another provided a strange kind of constancy. Beckermann's film shows us how carelessly the world passes us by. Yet in Celan's haunting words to Bachmann, there was always, "in the slipstream, thousandfold: you".

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Ruth Beckermann
Screenplay
Ruth Beckermann
Ina Hartwig
Dramaturge
Bernadette Weigel
The correspondence between Ingeborg Bachmann and

Paul Celan was published under the title *Herzzeit*. The epilogue is from the novel *Malina* by Ingeborg Bachmann
Cinematography
Johannes Hammel
Editor
Dieter Pichler

Sound
Georg Misch
©Ruth Beckermann
Filmproduktion
Production Companies
A film by Ruth Beckermann
Produced with

the support of Österreichisches Filminstitut, ORF Film/Fernseh-Abkommen, Filmstandort Austria

Cast
Anja Plaschg

Ingeborg Bachmann
Laurence Rupp
Paul Celan

In Colour
[1.78:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Contemporary Films

Austrian theatrical title
Die Geträumten

Vienna, the present. Over the course of a day two actors, a man and a woman, record extracts from the letters of the poets Ingeborg Bachmann and Paul Celan.

Bachmann and Celan met in Vienna in Spring 1948. The son of Romanian Jews killed in a Nazi death camp, Celan was already a highly regarded poet, travelling through Vienna en route to Paris. Bachmann, whose teacher father had been an NSDAP member, was six years Celan's junior and at the time still a student, working on her doctoral thesis.

After that first meeting the pair were separated until 1950, when they spent two months living together – disastrously – in Paris. In 1951 Celan married the artist Gisèle de Lestrang, much to Bachmann's grief. In 1957 Bachmann and Celan met again at a symposium in Wuppertal, and resumed their affair,

although this phase of their relationship ended after Bachmann began living with Swiss writer Max Frisch, the following year. They continued to write to one another for over twenty years, but Celan's letters took an increasingly sour tone: the result of Celan's feelings of persecution having suffered false accusations of plagiarism. Bachmann moved to defend him, but with little success. Celan committed suicide in Paris in 1970. Bachmann died three years later after a cigarette caused a fire in her bedroom.

We watch the two actors at work, but also during their breaks: smoking together, listening to music, lunching and discussing the relationship of the two poets. The film is bookended by a reading from Celan's poem "Egypt" (1948), and one from Beckermann's novel 'Malina' (1971).

The Edge of Seventeen

USA/People's Republic of China 2016

Director: Kelly Fremon Craig

Reviewed by Nikki Baughan

It's virtually impossible to find anything approaching originality in the overstuffed teen-movie genre, and the premise of Kelly Fremon Craig's debut feature would not suggest there's any to be uncovered here. The story of a teenage girl struggling to find her place in the world has informed myriad films, from John Hughes's classic *Sixteen Candles* (1984) to occult drama *The Craft* (1996), but the whip-smarts of writer/director Craig's screenplay, together with an acerbic, authentic performance from Hailee Steinfeld, means that *The Edge of Seventeen* is a burst of breezy fresh air, with surprising depths.

Steinfeld is 17-year-old Nadine, a depressive loner straddling the void between childhood and adulthood, whose only source of happiness is her best friend Krista (Haley Lu Richardson). A meet-cute flashback reveals how they bonded over a caterpillar at a young age, their friendship enduring through the pains of adolescence and the death of Nadine's beloved father. Their bond is shaken to its core, however, when Krista embarks on a relationship with Nadine's golden-boy older brother Darian (Blake Jenner). Feeling as if she's lost her rudder, Nadine withdraws even further, confiding only in cynical teacher Mr Bruner (a wonderful Woody Harrelson), reluctantly engaging with smitten classmate Erwin (Hayden Szeto) and lusting after enigmatic bad boy Nick (Alexander Calvert).

The plot elements are undeniably generic – this is, after all, the tried-and-tested road map of the adolescent experience – but the film's strength comes not from the familiar rite-of-passage narrative but rather from the way in which it's presented. Steinfeld plays Nadine as an intelligent, sarcastic, self-aware and, despite her protestations of being an "old soul", thoroughly modern protagonist; plugged into the global hive mind via smartphone, she believes she is worldly-wise but lacks the experience to back it up. A hilarious moment when she inadvertently sends an explicit Facebook message to her crush, with surprising results, illustrates the eroding social barriers that today's teens must navigate. Like the film itself, it's a sequence played for laughs but it reveals some poignant truths about the changing nature of social interaction.

The Edge of Seventeen also acknowledges that it's not just romantic relationships that are problematic for those on the cusp of adulthood,



Hailee Steinfeld, Haley Lu Richardson

Ethel & Ernest

Director: Roger Mainwood
United Kingdom/Luxembourg/USA 2016

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

Published in 1998, Raymond Briggs's graphic novel *Ethel & Ernest* is something of an outlier in the treasured illustrator and author's oeuvre for its wholly biographical nature. A touching and habitually witty tribute to Briggs's parents and the outwardly unexceptional life they shared over 43 years, it follows the couple from a first meeting in 1928 through to their deaths in 1971; in between, they navigate marriage, parenthood and the rapid changes in world events, technology and social mores.

This warm, sensitive adaptation by animation stable Lupus Films has considerable pedigree in relation to Briggs's output: writer/director Roger Mainwood worked on *The Snowman* (1982), *When the Wind Blows* (1986) and *Father Christmas* (1991), while animation director and past Sylvain Chomet collaborator Peter Dodd was a key figure on television-only sequel *The Snowman and the Snowdog* (2012). Combining hand-painted and digitally rendered techniques, *Ethel & Ernest* has a somewhat slicker, bolder appearance than earlier adaptations. Most importantly, though, Briggs's distinctive pictorial style and bittersweet tone remain thoroughly intact.

Briggs himself appears in a brief live-action foreword – likely a nod to his original TV introduction to *The Snowman*. Sipping tea from a *Snowman* mug in his bric-a-brac-filled studio, he notes that his parents were not extraordinary in any way. But then it's *Ethel & Ernest's* celebration of the quotidian, of everyday folks buffeted by the winds of change, that makes it so captivating. It begins in 1920s London, as lady's maid Ethel (voiced by Brenda Blethyn) becomes smitten with Ernest (Jim Broadbent), the chirpy delivery boy who cycles past her window most days. Their first date is a trip to the cinema to see John Ford's *Hangman's House*, during which Ethel swoons over star Victor McLaglen – decades later, on her hospital deathbed, she will mistake her husband for the screen idol. Marriage swiftly follows, and the purchase of a modest lifelong home in Wimbledon. A picture of an infant adorns their bedroom, yet it's some years before baby Raymond arrives. In one of the film's many acute nods at the unforgiving gallop of time, a curt doctor informs the crestfallen Ernest that Ethel



Drawn together: *Ethel & Ernest*

should not have any more children at her age ("It's either no more baby... or no more wife").

Ethel & Ernest frequently mines both humour and stinging pathos from its couple's differing worldviews and expectations. Ernest is proudly working-class and a committed socialist; Ethel, on the other hand, has thwarted aspirations to the high life, which are often dismissed by Ernest as "a bit posh". In their general befuddlement with matters both technological (the advent of television, the moon landings) and societal (the decriminalisation of homosexuality), they recall another Briggs couple, the uncomprehending James and Hilda Bloggs of anti-nuclear fable *When the Wind Blows*. Here, WWII replaces atomic holocaust, but we see similar vignettes incorporating DIY shelters and steadily ominous radio addresses.

The depiction of London during the Blitz is particularly vivid, with the otherwise eternally chipper Ernest haunted by the sights he witnesses while volunteering as a fireman. Post-war challenges are of a different stripe, such as the grown-up Raymond's decision to attend art school – a move that leaves his parents in virtual mourning. Characteristically for Briggs, there's a frank, unsentimental approach to death and loss. By the final frames, in which Raymond – once temporarily separated from his parents as a wartime evacuee, now fully torn asunder – ponders the fully matured pear tree that he planted from a pip in his parents' garden, it would take a hard heart not to be moved by the absence within the adjacent four walls. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by James L. Brooks Richard Sakai Julie Ansell	Production Companies STX Entertainment and Huayi Brothers Pictures present a Gracie Films production	Woody Harrelson Mr Bruner
Written by Kelly Fremen Craig	Executive Producers Brendan Ferguson Pete Corral Cathy Schulman Wang Zhongjun Wang Zhonglei Jerry Ye	Kyra Sedgwick Mona
Director of Photography Doug Emmett	Producers Hayden Szeto Erwin	Haley Lu Richardson Krista
Edited by Tracey Wadmore-Smith	Production Designer William Arnold	Blake Jenner Darian
Music Atti Örvarsson	Re-recording Mixers Kevin O'Connell Deb Adair Chris Carpenter	Hayden Szeto Tom
Costume Designer Carla Hetland	Cast Hailee Steinfeld Nadine	Eric Keenleyside Nick Mossman
©STX Productions, LLC.		Dolby Digital In Colour [1.85:1]
		Distributor E! Films

Seventeen-year-old loner Nadine seems to have only one source of happiness: her best friend Krista, with whom she's enjoyed a close relationship since they were very young. In flashback, we see how their friendship has endured through the death of Nadine's father and her strained relationship with her overbearing mother. When Krista begins a romance with Nadine's older brother Darian, however, it causes a rift in the girls' friendship. Feeling completely alone, Nadine confides in cynical teacher Mr Bruner and, despite the fact that classmate Erwin is clearly smitten with her, pursues an ill-fated crush on bad boy Nick. When an inadvertent Facebook message leads Nadine to see Nick's true colours, however, she finally realises the value of genuine connection; she makes peace with Darian, Krista and her mother, and begins a relationship with Erwin.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Camilla Deakin	Supervising Sound Editor/Re-recording Mixer Ruth Fielding Stephan Roelants	Cymru Wales CBC
Producers Raymond Briggs	Based on the graphic novel by Raymond Briggs	Production Companies A Universal presentation BBC and BFI present a Lupus Films production in association with Ethel and Ernest Productions, Melusine Productions, Cloth Cat Animation
Editor Richard Overall	Art Director Robin Shaw	
Original Music		

London, 1928. Ernest, a delivery boy, and Ethel, a lady's maid, meet and quickly fall in love. They soon marry and buy a house in Wimbledon. Ernest works as a milkman, while Ethel becomes a housewife. Some years later, Ernest and Ethel have a child, Raymond. On the outbreak of WWII, Raymond is evacuated to Dorset. During the Blitz, Ernest and Ethel's house is bombed, but they escape unscathed. After the war, Raymond is

Voice Cast Brenda Blethyn Ethel Briggs Jim Broadbent Ernest Briggs Luke Treadaway Raymond Briggs Macready Massey teenage Raymond Harry Collett young Raymond Roger Allam 1930s doctor	June Brown Ernest's step-mother Karyn Claydon Jean
	In Colour
	Distributor Vertigo Films

accepted into a grammar school. Years later, he dismays his parents by enrolling at art college. Raymond tells Ethel that he and his fiancée Jean, who suffers from schizophrenia, will likely not have children. Ernest retires after 37 years of service. Raymond and Jean buy a house in rural Sussex. Ethel dies in 1971, and Ernest follows shortly after. Clearing his parents' house, Raymond sees that the pear tree he planted as a boy is now fully mature.

Francofonia

France/Germany/The Netherlands/Japan 2014
Director: Alexander Sokurov

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

What would France be without the Louvre? That's one of the questions asked by Alexander Sokurov's wide-ranging voiceover in this feature-length essay exploring the value of the great national institutions that preserve the artworks of the past. Made in collaboration with the Louvre itself, and featuring significant, seemingly after-hours access to its galleries and labyrinthine inner workings, the film certainly allows us to marvel anew at the sheer richness of the collection and the scale of a building complex that has evolved over many centuries. Back in 2002, Sokurov's *Russian Ark* evoked a similar sense of wonder about the Hermitage in St Petersburg, but the first thing to say about *Francofonia* is that he hasn't simply turned out a French version of the same movie, the results proving stylistically some distance apart.

For instance, *Russian Ark* operated as a marvel of the new digital cinema – a startling 99-minute shot snaking round the galleries and Grand Ballroom, encompassing various tableaux bringing the past to life – its purported single take delivering what Sokurov termed “the flow of time”. With *Francofonia* we're outside that flow, looking in on the past from various angles, and the film is decidedly fragmented in construction. One minute we're with Sokurov in his office on a pixellating Skype call to a container ship whose cargo of museum treasures could be lost to heavy seas, then we're into a historical reconstruction of the plight of the emptied Louvre during the Nazi occupation of WWII; next we're back again to extensive archive footage expanding on the historical context, and then we're following a ghostly Napoleon and Revolutionary icon Marianne as they flit through the modern Louvre of an evening. The unifying factor on this occasion is Sokurov's own virtually all-encompassing Russian voiceover, working in concert with the collage of images to direct the audience's thoughts this way and that. He has the grace at one point to ask whether we're getting sick of the sound of his voice, but it provides an effective grounding, since we never quite know where the next scene will take us – unlike *Russian Ark*, where progress is not necessarily predictable but very much circumscribed.

All of which makes *Francofonia* tricky to encapsulate in a few words, since its eccentricities are miles away from the usual TV-arts-type doc. Some of it is genuinely head-scratching (the minutes of black leader with orchestral underscore where you'd expect the end credits), some of it unresolved in a way that viewers might find frustrating (who knows if the container ship actually survives?). But if its overall personality is slightly pompous and self-involved, at least it engages us and makes us consider its themes afresh. The whole container-ship angle, for instance, slots in scary video footage of giant waves lashing cargo-laden vessels, thus providing an effective visual metaphor for the uncontrollable violence of history. Sokurov draws in deathbed photographs of Chekhov and Tolstoy to hint at the melancholia of feeling that all the great artists are gone, while a deft montage of Old Master portraiture in the Louvre sharpens his point that seeing these vivid faces connects



The French collection: Johanna Korthals Altes, Vincent Németh

our own human identity to that of our ancestors. Elsewhere, indeed, the images he chooses are so apt that they require no commentary: the carved winged bulls from ancient Assyria can't help but bring contemporary events in the Middle East into focus, spotlighting Sokurov's central thread about the need for cultural preservation.

This theme is elsewhere enacted through dramatised interludes featuring Jacques Jaujard, head of the Louvre during WWII, and German army officer Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich, wartime enemies who worked together to preserve the museum's treasures. The actors (especially Louis-Do de Lencquesaing, uncharacteristically but effectively buttoned-down as Jaujard) are good enough to draw us

into their story, so much so that we could do with a bit more of it, perhaps at the expense of the Napoleonic lookalike determined to pick out his own portraits on the walls and take credit for everything else in the Louvre. As cameraman Bruno Delbonnel's lovely aerial shots capture the building from on high in sepia tones that fold past into present, Napoleon's bluster reminds us too of the imperial plunder that's played its part in such grand collections, here treated by the Nazi invaders with a kind of reverence they did not apply to the brutal siege of Leningrad. This is a complicated picture, Sokurov reminds us, and like a visit to the Louvre itself his film is overstuffed, somewhat disorientating, but ultimately a memorable and enriching experience. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Pierre-Olivier Bardet
Thomas Kufus
Els Vandervorst
Director of Photography
Bruno Delbonnel
Editing
Alexei Jankowski
Hansjörg Weissbrich
Music
Murat Kabardokov
Original Sound
André Rigaut
Jac Vleeshouwer
Costume Design
Colombe Laurent
Prévost

©Idéale Audience, zero one film, N279 Entertainment, ARTE France Cinéma, Musée du Louvre
Production Companies
Idéale Audience, zero one film, N279 Entertainment present in co-production with ARTE France Cinéma, Le Musée du Louvre with the support of Eurimages, Centre National de la Cinématographie et de l'Image Animée,

Medienboard Berlin-Brandenburg, Film- und Medienstiftung NRW, Filmförderungsanstalt, Deutscher FilmFörderFonds, Netherlands Film Fund, MEDIA Programme of the European Union (Media Slate) a film by Alexander Sokurov An Idéale Audience, zero one film, N279 Entertainment production In co-production with

ARTE France Cinéma, Cinema production Musée du Louvre - 'Le Louvre s'offre aux cinéastes - Opus 2' With the support of Kinoshita Group With the participation of ARTE France - Unité société et culture, Sophie Dulac Distribution, Films Boutique, VPRO, Contact Film, Kino Films
Executive Producers
Claire Lion
Tassilo Aschauer
Ann Carolin Renninger

Marianne Van Hardeveld

Cast

Louis Do de Lencquesaing
Jacques Jaujard
Benjamin Utzerath
Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich
Vincent Németh
Napoléon Bonaparte
Johanna Korthals Altes
Marianne
Andrey Chelpanov
Jean-Claude Caër

voices of:
Alexander Sokurov
Francois Smesny
Peter Lontzek

In Colour
[1.66:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Curzon Artificial Eye

In this essay film on the cultural value of the preservation of art, director Alexander Sokurov narrates a wide-ranging historical discussion, intercut with a dramatisation of the relationship between Jacques Jaujard, head of the Louvre during WWII, and Count Franziskus Wolff-Metternich, the German army officer responsible for cultural property. Sokurov muses on his own feelings of connection with the past through the portraiture in great European paintings, and sees museums such as the Louvre and the Hermitage in St Petersburg as essential to national identity. He has a fractured Skype conversation with the captain of a container ship toiling in heavy seas, putting its cargo of museum artefacts at risk. This

leads into a consideration of museum collections as an exemplar of imperial plunder, underlined by the presence of a ghostly Napoleon Bonaparte – joined by a spectral Marianne, the icon of the French Revolution – who wander through today's Louvre galleries after hours. While Jaujard and Metternich develop a guarded but fruitful relationship, with the German as keen as his French counterpart to keep the artworks secreted safely in various rural chateaux, Sokurov surprises both of them by revealing the future course of the war and their own subsequent personal destinies – both were later to receive the Légion d'honneur, and Jaujard testified during Metternich's post-war denazification process.

Gimme Danger

USA 2016

Director: Jim Jarmusch

See Feature
on page 16

Reviewed by Sam Davies

Bliss it was in 1969 to be alive – unless you were young and in The Stooges, in which case it was very unpleasant: ‘No Fun’, ‘Not Right’, ‘We Will Fall’, run the song titles. And 1969? Just “another year with nothing to do” sang lead singer Iggy Pop. The Stooges spoke a language of negation, nihilism, the abject: pure punk, a decade ahead of schedule. While Mick Jagger crowed about having women under his thumb, Iggy sang “I wanna be your dog.” Later, recording the 1970 album *Funhouse*, Iggy took to wearing a studded dog collar. The Velvet Underground had mined similar sadomasochistic seams, but even a track like ‘Venus in Furs’ took the viewpoint of the observer – not, as in the case of ‘Dog’, the willing sub. While the gilded youth of California cultivated beautiful souls, The Stooges appeared to perform wanton acts of vandalism on theirs. “I think I helped wipe out the 60s,” deadpans Iggy in one archive clip here.

Iggy Pop and director Jim Jarmusch go back a long way, first collaborating on a short film in 1993, which Jarmusch later included in the feature-length *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003). This closeness no doubt helped, and *Gimme Danger* rests on the quality of its central interview material with Iggy – but then he has always been an interviewer’s dream (even when speaking in parenthesis, describing Nico and John Cale as “the Morticia and Gomez” of the downtown New York scene). Other talking heads are kept to a minimum beyond the core group members, all now sadly passed away with the exception of guitarist James Williamson.

The film starts with the group on its last legs, a “death march” of a 1974 tour winding up in Detroit’s Michigan Palace. Jarmusch quickly rewinds to the start, with Iggy beating up a drum kit in his parents’ trailer, and takes it chronologically from there. “In the Ashetons I found primitive man,” grins Iggy at one point,

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Carter Logan
Fernando Sulichin
Rob Wilson
Written by
Jim Jarmusch
Director of Photography
Tom Krueger
Edited by
Affonso Gonçalves
Adam Kurnitz
Sound Designer
Robert Hein

©Low Mind Films Inc.
Production Companies
Amazon Studios
presents in

association with
Better Wide a
Low Mind Films
production
A film by Jim
Jarmusch
Executive Producers
Serge Lobo
Jose Ibanez
Jon Kilik
Film Extracts
Ziggy Stardust
and the Spiders
from Mars (1973)
The Long, Long
Trailer (1953)
Velvet Goldmine
(1998)
Monterey Pop (1968)

The Ten
Commandments
(1956)

In Colour
[1.78:1] and [1.33:1]

Distributor
Dogwoof

A documentary chronicling the troubled career of the Michigan group The Stooges. Using archive clips and interviews with the surviving members, The Stooges’ stop-start career is mapped from local success in late-1960s Detroit to a period with major label Elektra and a brief resurgence with the support of David Bowie before their break-up in 1974. The Stooges’ subsequent influence and various reincarnations from 2003 onwards are also discussed.



Minimalists: The Stooges

talking about brothers Ron and Scott, whom he recruited on guitar and drums respectively. But The Stooges’ primitivism was deceptively smart. While most of the counterculture wanted to progress but just became progressive, with ever more elaborate arrangements and concepts that pretended to the status of art, The Stooges zeroed in on a near-Zen minimalism of form – like their spiritual godchildren the Ramones – in which rock became pop (art), a series of super-physical BANGS! and POWS! “I liked the mega-clang,” recalls Iggy of a school trip to a Detroit car plant. To keep his songwriting lean, mean and to the point, Iggy restricted himself to a lyrical dictionary of “25 words... or less”. The three classic Stooges albums clock in at around 35 minutes – barely longer than the average TV sitcom.

The Stooges were never the *idiots savants* they presented themselves as, and *Gimme Danger* subtly but thoroughly maps their musical hinterlands. Iggy discusses the education in the avant-garde that he picked up as a record-store clerk in the group’s early stages, the importance of the Once Festival at University of Michigan (featuring Robert Ashley, Cathy Berberian, Luciano Berio and John Cage), and reminisces about formative group listening sessions, “lights out, on drugs”, with the experimental homemade percussion pieces of Harry Partch on the turntable. “Play like Maceo Parker on acid,” was Iggy’s instruction to Steve Mackay, the saxophone player recruited for *Funhouse*.

Jarmusch also weaves in the pop culture that produced the group, packing the screen Julien Temple-style with visual puns, TV snippets and occasional absurdism: one anecdote is animated with band members’ heads replaced with van Eyck portraits. And he makes the point about The Stooges’ subsequent influence with an eloquent montage building from a trickle to a flood of artists covering their songs: the Ramones, The Dictators, the Dead Boys, the Sex Pistols, The Damned, The Adverts, Black Flag, Germs, Husker Du and many more. But there’s something naggingly perfunctory about *Gimme Danger*. It’s not just the cheap-looking captions: Jarmusch feels all too ready to conform to documentary formula. Not that a performative echo of Iggy Pop’s stagecraft – stage-diving, bottle-smashing, oral-sex-inviting – would be the best advised or even a possible approach to take. But in the end *Gimme Danger* never quite does what a Stooges film should – grab you by the throat and pin you to the seat. **S**

The Girl on the Train

USA/India 2016

Director: Tate Taylor

Certificate 15 111m 40s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Thriller filmmaking, the art of subtly misdirecting the audience, has points in common with the abusive practice of gaslighting, and there is a temptation to describe the denouement of *The Girl on the Train*, in which the gaslighter gets his comeuppance at the hands the gaslit, without and despite the involvement of the police, as a feminist appropriation of the genre (as well as of male violence). But that would be a largely fruitless and certainly patience-testing exercise, because *The Girl on the Train* is a lamentably poor film, awkwardly structured and ineptly executed.

Erin Cressida Wilson’s adaptation of Paula Hawkins’s bestseller poses challenges. Like the novel, it shifts between the viewpoints of three women, at least two of whom are unreliable: Rachel (Emily Blunt), the titular ‘girl’; Anna (Rebecca Ferguson), former mistress and now wife of Rachel’s ex-husband Tom (Justin Theroux); and Megan (Haley Bennett), nanny to Anna’s child, current mistress to Tom and eventually murder victim. Rachel, an alcoholic, frequently blacks out and suffers memory loss, while Megan, most of whose story is told to her analyst Kamal (Edgar Ramirez), is a self-described compulsive liar. Consequently, there are false flashbacks based on lies and fantasies, and flashbacks that take time to become clear, all of which requires a certain amount of finesse if the audience is not to feel duped.

None of these challenges is met by director Tate Taylor. The breakdown into three points of view doesn’t work; Anna barely registers; and the most revealing of Megan’s flashbacks comes after her death, inelegantly disrupting the narrative pattern and throwing into confusion the vital thriller questions of who knows what and when. Rachel’s blurry blackout flashbacks to the night of Megan’s disappearance, occasionally with corny flicker effects, look simply amateurish.

The obvious comparison is with David Fincher’s *Gone Girl* (2014), a superlatively well-made film that surpasses Taylor’s in every respect, but perhaps most importantly in its rigorous attention to point of view. Both stories are concerned with appearances – the cultivation and display of the self in a culturally barren consumerist society – but where *Gone Girl*, a tale of strangers who share a bed, was darkly satirical, *The Girl on the Train* is terminally beige. The fantasy of affluent suburban



Through the looking glass: Emily Blunt

motherhood that Rachel, in her distraught state, idealises, never comes into critical focus – indeed, the film virtually endorses it – and the two monstrous men at the film's centre are presented as bad apples, signifying nothing more.

The film's hinge comes when, through a chance meeting, Rachel learns that Tom duped and manipulated her during their marriage, casting her memories into doubt, but the revelation occurs as just another plot twist among too many. Her memories were already in doubt, and the events covered by this psychological abuse are unrelated to the central mystery of Megan's murder. Tom is as crude a gaslighter as Taylor is a director, but whereas Tom managed to convince Rachel of the exact opposite of the truth, Taylor is unable to manipulate the audience to the same degree. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Marc Platt
Jared Leboff

Screenplay

Erin Cressida Wilson

Based on the novel

by Paula Hawkins

Director of

Photography

Charlotte Bruus

Christensen

Edited by

Michael McCusker

Andrew Buckland

Production

Designer

Kevin Thompson

Music

Danny Elfman

Sound Re-

recording Mixers

Scott Millan

Gregg Rudloff

Costume Designers

Michelle Matland

Ann Roth

@Storyteller

Distribution Co., LLC

Production

Companies

Dreamworks

Pictures, Reliance

Entertainment and

Entertainment One

present a Marc

Platt production

A Tate Taylor film

Executive Producer

Celia Costas

Cast

Emily Blunt

Rachel

Rebecca Ferguson

Anna

Haley Bennett

Megan

Justin Theroux

Tom

Luke Evans

Scott

Allison Janney

Detective Riley

Édgar Ramírez

Dr Kamal Abdic

Lisa Kudrow

Martha

Laura Prepon

Cathy

Darren Goldstein

man in the suit

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[L.85:1]

Distributor

El Films

Girls Lost

Sweden/Finland/Denmark 2015

Director: Alexandra-Therese Keining

Certificate 15 105m 58s

Reviewed by Lisa Mullen

This ambitious and well-crafted young-adult fable (based on a novel by Jessica Schiefauer) starts with a familiar story about school bullying but gives it a fascinating magic-realist twist. Three gay girls – Kim (Tuva Jagell), Momo (Louise Nyvall) and Bella (Wilma Holmén) – suffer a daily ordeal of violence and name-calling, and increasingly fall back on their own private world of creativity and imagination, where their rock-solid friendship helps them to survive. Their lives change, however, when Bella's latest gardening project produces a spooky black flower that oozes a sweet sap with the power to turn them temporarily into boys. The three newly minted lads (Emrik Ohlander, Alexander Gustavsson and Vilgot Ostwald Vesterlund) head off into the night for some fun, and for a while the trio get to indulge in some satisfying power reversals: even when they go back to being girls, they exude a sense of power and confidence that gives the bullies pause. But when Kim starts to suspect that her male form reflects who she really is, things take a darker turn and the scene is set for confusion, rejection and heartbreak.

The gender transformation is handled superbly by writer-director Alexandra-Therese Keining, who resists the temptation to go for whizz-bang effects and instead lets it happen almost imperceptibly through some careful editing and judicious visual blending. The cast (and the casting department) deserve real credit for making the double identities so believable; in particular, Jagell and Ohlander craft a very persuasive single character out of the conflicted sides of Kim. It's undeniably perturbing, though, to notice the film's overwhelming insistence that you have to be a boy to have any fun, or feel confident, or stand up for yourself. On the other hand, perhaps this simply follows Kim's perspective; in any case, the gang of lads s/he falls in with, and the boy (Mandus Berg) s/he finds her/himself attracted to, are also shown struggling to



Tuva Jagell, Louise Nyvall, Wilma Holmén

survive in their own gender-defined emotional and behavioural cages. The film's English title echoes that of Joel Schumacher's seminal teen-vampire thriller *The Lost Boys* (1987), and there's a similar aesthetic in Keining's vision of dark, subterranean meeting places full of flickering flames and looming shadows, to go with the similar slide into fun-gone-sour. It's certainly not just the girls who are lost in the dark here.

A skilful use of colour and light characterises Keining's emotionally resonant visuals, particularly in the night scenes and in several underwater sequences that powerfully convey Kim's sense of both wild possibility and stifling otherness. Narratively, though, Keining struggles to hold it together in the final act, and there is a lot of directionless weeping and wailing as the story draws to its inconclusive and unsettling end. It's a pity the characters of Momo and Bella are so underwritten; instead of spending more time with them, Keining chooses to hammer home Kim's emotional upheavals when they have already been vividly portrayed and understood. Still, such plotting missteps do not detract from a very watchable film that explores delicate questions about gender identity without ever tipping over into preachiness. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Helena Wirenhed

Olle Wirenhed

Screenplay

Alexandra-Therese

Keining

Based on the novel

Pojkarna by Jessica

Schiefauer

Director of

Photography

Ragna Jorming

Editor

Malin Lindström

Production Designer

Kaisa Mäkinen

Music

Sophia Ersson

Sound Design

Pietari Koskinen

Costume Designer

Sara Pertmann

@Götafilms

Production

Companies

Götafilms present in

co-production with

Periferia Productions,

Film i Väst and

Sveriges Television

With the support

of Svenska

Filminstitutet,

Finlands Filmstiftelse

and Nordisk Film

& TV Fond

A film by Alexandra-

Therese Keining

Produced by Götafilms

in co-production

with Film i Väst,

Periferia Productions,

Sveriges Television

With the support of

Svenska Filminstitutet

- Filmkonsulenterna,

Finlands Filmstiftelse

and Nordisk Film

& TV Fond

in association

with YLE

Executive Producer

Christer Nilsson

Cast

Tuva Jagell

Kim

Emrik Ohlander

Kim

Louise Nyvall

Momo

Alexander

Subtitles

Distributor

Peccadillo Pictures

Swedish

theatrical title

Pojkarna

New York, present day. Rachel, a jobless alcoholic divorcee, spends her days riding the train between the commuter belt and Manhattan, obsessing over Megan and Scott, a young couple who live a few doors down from her old house, now inhabited by her ex-husband Tom, his new wife (and former mistress) Anna and their child. Rachel frequently harasses Tom and Anna. She is enraged when she sees Megan embracing a man who is not Scott, projecting her feelings about her own betrayal by Tom on to a stranger.

Drunk one evening, Rachel confronts either Anna or Megan in a tunnel, then blacks out. Waking next morning, injured and unsure what has happened, she learns that Megan is missing. Under suspicion herself, Rachel tells the police that Megan was having an affair. Masquerading as Megan's friend, she visits Scott, who tells her that Megan had a therapist, Kamal, on whom police attention subsequently focuses. Kamal is soon cleared, however. Rachel begins to visit him in order to recover her memories. Megan's body is found; it is revealed that she was pregnant. A chance encounter with the wife of Tom's former boss leads Rachel to realise that he fooled her into believing that she was a violent abuser during their relationship. Her confidence boosted by this revelation, she is able to recall the events of the fateful night. She and Anna discover simultaneously that Tom and Megan were having an affair, and deduce that he killed her. Rachel confronts him, and wounds him in self-defence when he attacks; Anna finishes him off. The two women square their accounts to the police.

Small-town Sweden, present day. Teenage girls Kim, Momo and Bella are bullied at school because they don't fit into mainstream gender stereotypes. They accidentally plant a magic seed that grows into a strange black flower oozing a vanilla-scented sap. When they drink the sap, it turns them into boys. At first, their double identities are fun, and even when they are back at school and in their female form they discover new reserves of confidence and strength, particularly Kim, who finally stands up to the bullies. Tensions quickly arise, however. Whereas Momo and Bella are happy to return to being girls, Kim knows that her male form is

who she really is. As a boy, she falls in with a group of rebel lads who drink, steal and take drugs. She feels a particular connection to the troubled Tony, and neglects her friends. A desperate Momo is falling in love with Kim in her female form, but Kim wants to stay as a boy and explore her feelings for Tony. Kim and Tony share an intimate moment while swimming, but then he angrily pushes Kim away and returns to his girlfriend. All three girls are heartbroken: Momo, stung by rejection, sets fire to Bella's beloved greenhouse where the magic plant is growing. Kim, confused and hurt, packs up and leaves home, possibly contemplating suicide.

A Hundred Streets

United Kingdom 2016
Director: Jim O'Hanlon
Certificate 15 93m 24s

Reviewed by Nikki Baughan

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

At a pre-screening introduction, screenwriter Leon F. Butler promised that *A Hundred Streets* would be the very antithesis of traditional onscreen portrayals of London – a city he described as disparate and ghettoised in everything from *Notting Hill* (1999) to *Wimbledon* (2004). Hopes were high, then, for a true celebration of our multicultural capital. But while this extension of Butler's 2012 short *One Square Mile* contains some interesting moments, it's as generic a portrait of London as any before – depicting a place where people move in packs, blindly pursuing their own agendas.

Set within 100 streets around Battersea (although, beyond the title and establishing shots, the significance of the geography is never made clear), the story revolves around three different individuals. There's Max (Idris Elba), a drink-and-drug-addicted former rugby star whose infidelities have destroyed his marriage to Emily (Gemma Arterton). In close proximity but a world away from Max's luxurious townhouse lives young Kingsley (Franz Drameh), who yearns to escape the violent pull of his council estate. And cab driver George (Charlie Creed-Miles) is planning to adopt a baby with his wife Kathy (Kierston Wareing), only to be thrown into turmoil when he accidentally kills a pedestrian.

Butler's by-the-numbers screenplay is packed with stereotypical characters – the self-destructive ex-celeb, the gangland youth, the cockney cabbie – who all flit around the



Postcode of honour: Idris Elba

peripheries of each other's lives without having any really meaningful interaction. True, there are some interesting nuggets; the friendship between Kingsley and Emily's ageing thespian friend Terence (Ken Stott), which sparks after a chance meeting in the cemetery where Kingsley is doing community service, is well played if rather hackneyed, the cross-generational dynamic genuine enough for the viewer to root for the change it brings.

There are also intriguing parallels to be drawn between Kingsley and Max, who are both presented as victims of their environment; while Kingsley fights for a better future, Max is a reminder that success doesn't guarantee happiness. Frustratingly, however, neither Butler nor director Jim O'Hanlon sketches these moments in any lasting detail, suggesting not that the city is a symbiotic melting pot of opportunity but rather that life and connections are random, and often fleeting.

While Max, Kingsley and George may be mere ciphers for the cultural factions they represent, the women come off far worse. They exist only to support the men in their lives, and particularly badly treated is Arterton, an actress of immense versatility reduced here to playing the tired role of forgiving wife. Though Emily's life is torn apart by Max's affairs and substance abuse, she gives up a shot at true happiness with Tom Cullen's sensitive photographer Jake to remain, albeit reluctantly, at his side. This takes in an uncomfortable sex scene, which Emily sobs her way through, and a melodramatic climax in which Max brandishes a shotgun on their balcony and Emily talks him down by revealing that she is carrying his baby. The schmaltzy violin soundtrack as Emily and their two kids watch Max carted away in a police car speaks to her continuing loyalty, despite his appalling behaviour. Equally, George's wife Kathy is never fleshed out beyond her desperate desire for a child, a dream she gives up without hesitation in order to help her husband deal with his demons. Noble, sure, but deeply uninspiring.

Ultimately, then, *A Hundred Streets* is not so much the story of a vibrant and dynamic city but of the troubled men who live within it and the women who sacrifice themselves to save them. It's a tale as old as Father Thames himself. ☹

Indignation

USA/Brazil/People's Republic of China/Germany 2015
Director: James Schamus
Certificate 15 110m 43s

Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

Veteran screenwriter/producer James Schamus makes his directorial debut with *Indignation*, adapted from Philip Roth's 29th novel. It's the autobiographical tale of a college freshman in 1951, raised Jewish but fiercely atheist, adjusting to a world away from his New Jersey home and falling for a confounding co-ed. Schamus, writer of many of Ang Lee's most successful films (including *The Ice Storm* and *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*) has transferred the short novel to the screen skilfully and with a clear literary intent.

That scholarly youth is Marcus, played with an endearing frankness by Logan Lerman, a former child actor who recently appeared in *Fury* (2014). He nicely captures the character's intellectual intensity, without breaking into nerdy caricature. This handsome, neatly attired young man, the self-described "nicest boy in the world", tentatively dates beautiful blonde student Olivia (played with spectral grace by Sarah Gadon), who is every bit as troubled as the mentally unbalanced father Marcus has left home to avoid. Her history of addiction and attempted suicide is as bewildering to Marcus as her sexual experience, but neither of them is suited to the morally conscientious world of Winesburg College, with its mandatory chapel attendance and curfews. The dean (an excellent and mostly comic turn by Tracy Letts) and Marcus's mother (acted with real sensitivity by Linda Emond) attempt to advise Marcus and curtail his independent streak, but as his paranoid father has warned, even "the tiniest mistake can have consequences", and the boy cannot be saved. The threat that engulfs him is the Korean War draft, presaged by a schoolfriend's funeral in the first reel and the rumble of cadet training drifting across the quad.

Schamus, who wrote the screenplay, trains his focus on Roth's characters, choosing to explore them in depth at the expense of the more obviously cinematic spectacles of the novel's fantasy images (including a frothing beer deluge) and its climactic scene of adolescent sexuality gone wild: a 'panty raid' in a blizzard. Care has been taken over the detail in the period backdrop and the buttoned-up costumes, though the warm autumnal palette suggests a cosy nostalgia at odds with the subject matter.

Transferring Marcus's campus job



Independents: Logan Lerman, Sarah Gadon

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Pippa Cross
Leon F. Butler
Idris Elba
Ros Hubbard

Screenplay

Leon F. Butler

Director of

Photography
Philipp Blaubach

Editors

Mark Eckersley
Chris Gill

Production

Designer
Ricky Eyles

Music

Paul Saunderson

Production

Sound Mixer
Nigel Albermaniche

Costume Designer

Miss Molly

One Square

Mile Ltd

Production

Companies
Produced in

association with
Kreo Films

Crossday

Productions, West

Fiction Films, Kreo

Films, Umedia

Executive

Producers
John Caudwell

Xavier Alcan

Thomas R. Atherton

Justin Bache

Janette Day

Mark Denney

Natasha Dwyer

Joe Hutchinson

Cast

Idris Elba

Max

Gemma Arterton

Emily

Charlie Creed-Miles

George

Franz Drameh

Kingsley

Kierston Wareing

Kathy

Tom Cullen

Jake

Ken Stott

Terence

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Vertigo Films

Present-day London. Within an area of 100 streets in Battersea, three people have very different lives. Former rugby star Max relies on drink and drugs; his infidelity has damaged his relationship with wife Emily. Kingsley is desperate to escape the gang violence of his sprawling estate; a chance meeting with Terence, an ageing actor, offers him a glimmer of hope. Cab driver George is preparing to adopt a baby with wife Kathy, until a fatal accident sends him spiralling into depression. Kingsley is told he must execute a fellow gang member, but a trigger-happy friend takes over the execution to secure his own place in the gang hierarchy. Max takes to his balcony armed with a shotgun; Emily talks him down, telling him that she is carrying his baby. After Max is taken away by the police, Kingsley stands on the banks of the Thames, looking to the future with renewed hope.

from the local bar to the library nestles the film within a literary world, just as Roth named the college after the small town of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Schamus has removed incidents and characters, but kept a memorable and lengthy dialogue scene in the dean's office almost intact: a claustrophobic, verbose confrontation, eating up 14 pages of the script and culminating in Marcus vomiting pointedly into a trophy cabinet.

The film is bookended by scenes showing the post-college life of the two lovers, one a less gruesome take on Roth's own vision of Marcus's future, and the other, featuring Olivia grey-haired and institutionalised, wholly imagined by Schamus. This last is a welcome attempt to balance the narrative in favour of its female protagonist, though Schamus uses a visual motif to suggest that, after all, Olivia's lopsided affair with Marcus was the bright spot of a long and difficult life. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Anthony Bregman
James Schamus
Rodrigo Teixeira
Written for the Screen by
James Schamus
Director of Photography
Christopher Blauvelt
Editor
Andrew Marcus
Production Designer
Inbal Weinberg
Music
Jay Wadley
Production Sound Mixer
Jam McLaughlin
Costume Designer
Amy Roth

@Winesburg Productions, LLC
Production Companies
RT Features and BFB Entertainment present in

association with X Filme Creative Pool and FilmNation Entertainment
Executive Producers
Caroline Jaczko
Avy Eschenasy
Stefanie Azpiazu
Lourenço Sant'Anna
Sophie Mas
Woody Mu
Logan Lerman
Lisa Wolofsky
Jonathan Bronfman

Cast
Logan Lerman
Marcus Messner
Sarah Gadon
Olivia Hutton
Tracy Letts
Dean Cauldwell
Linda Emond
Esther Messner
Danny Burstein

Ohio, 1951. Newark butcher's son Marcus enrolls at Winesburg College. He is an atheist and shares a dormitory with Max and Bert, the only other Jewish students who have refused to join the Jewish fraternity. One night, Marcus takes beautiful blonde Olivia out on a date and she performs oral sex on him, which leaves him confused. Later, Olivia tries to talk to him about it and in a letter reveals that she once tried to kill herself. Marcus fights with Max over her, and moves to another room. The dean calls Marcus into his office for an interview about his religious beliefs and social life. Marcus becomes increasingly offended, and vomits, waking up in a hospital bed having had his appendix out. Olivia visits him in hospital, as does his mother, who reveals that she wants a divorce from her increasingly unstable husband. However, she agrees not to proceed, in return extracting a promise from Marcus not to see Olivia any more. When Marcus returns to campus, Olivia has left. The dean tells him that she has had a nervous breakdown and asks if he got her pregnant. Marcus swears at the dean and is subsequently caught cheating on his mandatory chapel attendance and expelled. The film ends with his death in the Korean War and Olivia as an old woman in a nursing home.

Inferno

USA 2016
Director: Ron Howard
Certificate 12A 121m 27s

Reviewed by Adam Nayman

The ancients take their revenge in *Inferno*, and in more ways than one. Not only does this globetrotting thriller take full advantage of as many Old World locations, relics and renderings as possible – it is adapted, after all, from a novel by Dan Brown – but it also divides its dramatis personae so that the oldsters are on the side of all that is good and decent, opposing a cohort of malevolent millennials. When the only thing standing between humanity and its pre-emptive extermination by internet-savvy Ted-talking rationalist zealots is a Tom Hanks vehicle directed by Ron Howard, it's easy enough to read the situation as the Baby Boomers' last defiant stand – or, as the shadowy security-firm honcho played by Irrfan Khan puts it, "People only become tolerable once they turn 35."

It's actually sort of a relief to see Hanks take time out from his new sideline playing literal captains-cum-symbols-of-American exceptionalism to dust off his act as Robert Langdon, the code-breaking Cambridge scholar whose adventures on page and screen suggest Indiana Jones sans whip and hat – as if Harrison Ford went questing for the Lost Ark without changing out of his tweed jacket. That Howard sneaks in a minor *Raiders* homage near the end of the film's jumbo-sized (but somehow not overly draggy) two-hour running time evinces a bit of wittiness, which at least elevates *Inferno* above the earlier Langdon outings, the po-faced *Da Vinci Code* (2006) and the bottom-scrapingly bad *Angels & Demons* (2009). And if you take as read the fact that Brown's laborious puzzle narratives – this one about the race to locate and contain a genetically engineered biological weapon designed to combat worldwide overpopulation – are (and always have been) generic dreck embroidered with museum-tour-guide-level classical references, there's a certain pleasure in watching the pieces come together.

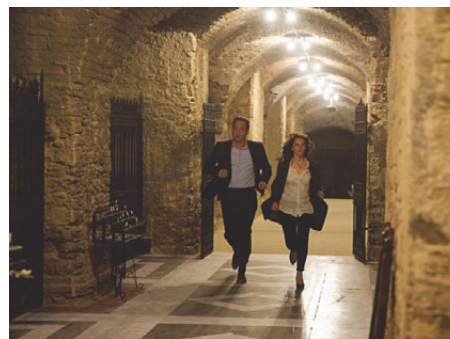
Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Brian Grazer
Ron Howard
Screenplay
David Koepp
Based upon the novel by Dan Brown
Director of Photography
Salvatore Totino
Edited by
Dan Hanley
Tom Elkins
Production Designer

Peter Wenham
Music
Hans Zimmer
Re-recording Mixers
Chris Jenkins
David Giammarco
Costume Designer
Julian Day
Visual Effects
Double Negative
Instinctual
Stunt Co-ordinator
Wade Eastwood

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Production Companies
Columbia Pictures and Imagine Entertainment
present in association with LStar Capital
a Brian Grazer production
A Ron Howard film
Executive Producers

Florence, the present. Cambridge scholar Dr Robert Langdon wakes in an emergency room with a head wound and no memory of the previous 48 hours. When an assassin masquerading as a police officer tries to shoot him, he escapes with the help of Dr Sienna Brooks, who has admired his writing since she was a child. Back at her apartment, they piece together a possible scenario in which Robert is searching for a mysterious biochemical agent – the invention of a reclusive billionaire who recently committed suicide under unusual circumstances – which could wreak untold havoc. As agents of both a private security firm and the World Health Organization descend on Florence, Robert and Sienna travel between museums, decoding a labyrinthine path that seems to lead to



Cryptic cruise: Tom Hanks, Felicity Jones

What *Inferno* can't do is work up any sort of sense of horror commensurate with its Dante-quoting title, and the fire-and-brimstone hallucinations suffered by a concussed and amnesiac Langdon are some seriously sub-*Devil's Advocate* stuff. As for the attempts to scare us with end-is-nigh rhetoric about dwindling space and resources, it's hard to detach them from 1) Brown's cynically exploitative narrative and dramatic context and 2) the way the movie keeps insisting on the moral and ethical imperative to maintain a buckling, subtly apocalypse-soon status quo. In the end, *Inferno* is nothing more than a middle finger to a strain of greater-good idealism, only a shade less comic-booky – and several degrees less compelling or complex – than *Watchmen*, from which its Ozymandias-ish villain cribs some dialogue about it being "one minute to midnight". The most entertaining thing in this studiously impersonal bit of prestige-season big-studio counterprogramming is Khan's performance as a cold-fish efficiency expert who elevates mercenary indifference to a mission statement – what better emblem for a film that wears its Renaissance art on its sleeve but is ultimately just a hard, metallic 'grown-up entertainment' machine? **S**

David Householter
Dan Brown
William M. Connor
Anna Culp
Ben Waisbren

Cast
Tom Hanks
Robert Langdon
Felicity Jones
Sienna Brooks
Irrfan Khan
Harry Sims

Omar Sy
Christoph Bouchard
Ben Foster
Bertrand Zobrist
Sidse Babett Knudsen
Elizabeth Sinskey
Ana Ularu
Vayentha
Ida Darvish
Marta Alvarez
Paul Ritter
Arbogast, CRC tech
Ida Darvish

Marta Alvarez

Dolby Atmos In Colour [1.85:1]

Distributor
Sony Pictures
Releasing UK

the virus. Robert suffers hallucinations inspired by Dante's 'Inferno', pointing to an impending apocalypse. Eventually it is revealed that much of the intrigue has been staged, and that Sienna is in fact an acolyte of the late billionaire (and was his lover), and that she has been using Robert to locate and release the Inferno virus. After being rescued from a rogue operative hoping to sell the virus on the black market, Robert joins forces with his old flame Elizabeth, who works for the World Health Organization, and other interested parties, and travels to Istanbul to prevent the catastrophe. He succeeds, though not before Sienna blows herself up in an attempt to unleash a global plague and cull the world population to a more manageable level. Robert returns to Cambridge.

The Innocents

France/Poland/Belgium 2016
Director: Anne Fontaine
Certificate 15 115m 22s

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

There's something about the convent that speaks to the very essence of cinema. Or at least a certain kind of cinema: one that is stark, subdued, ascetic. The opening frames of *The Innocents* whisper the names of Dreyer, Bresson and Bazin. It's shot in colour by DP Caroline Champetier but feels like a black-and-white film, its muted tones the damp beige of stone and mortar, the off-white of snow and the black of bare branches and nuns' habits. Even the blood that spills throughout is a dark shiny brown. The only bright flashes are flushed cheeks and a heavily symbolic scarlet dress. Likewise, the only sounds that pierce the hush are the howls of women in labour and the mewls of their newborn babies.

These babies are delivered by Mathilde (Lou de Laâge, poised and beautiful), a young, sexually liberated Red Cross doctor working in Poland in 1945. Born to the sisters who inhabit the convent where most of the film is set, the babies are the products of rape, conceived when Soviet soldiers (the only one-note villains in a film mired in moral complexity) stormed this sanctuary and brutalised its inhabitants. We're spared the spectacle of the nuns' ordeal, but its violence echoes through the film. Scenes of surgery and birth are graphic and unflinching, and in one horribly sinister sequence, the mere sound of footsteps beating beneath the nuns' evensong is stomach-churning. Against this backdrop, the newborns are shockingly real, their warm skin almost palpable. To the nuns, they are both a curse and a temptation, the 'gift' of new life both shameful and horrific. The Russian soldiers should have killed them, one of the nuns tells Mathilde. What a cruel miracle they didn't.

What now will happen to these children? At best, they are born into a traumatised country where no one wants them. At worst... well, as the film progresses, a creeping dread sets in about where exactly the Reverend Mother is taking them. Ferociously acted by Agata



Children of God: Eliza Rycembel

Kulesza, who played the licentious aunt in Pawel Pawlikowski's *Ida* (to which *The Innocents* is a kind of companion piece), the Reverend Mother is a striking reminder that at the heart of Christianity is a body in torment. She tells her charges that she has damned herself to save them – but she was damned from the moment those soldiers set foot in the convent.

Clinging to their vows of chastity, the nuns initially refuse to let Mathilde examine them. Many viewers will share Mathilde's frustration that these women won't set God aside to save their own lives. But *The Innocents* is a film about commitment – not just religious, but also maternal, professional, political. Mathilde considers herself a medic and a communist, a person who "has to believe in hope". She and her lover Samuel (Vincent Macaigne) are prepared to sacrifice their burgeoning romance for what they consider to be a greater cause.

It's a shame the film ends with a rather too convenient solution to the problems it throws up, since for the most part director Anne Fontaine, who co-wrote the screenplay with Pascal Bonitzer, Sabrina B. Karine and Alice Vial (adapting it from the true experiences of French Red Cross doctor Madeleine Pauliac), succeeds admirably in exploring the ways these women find to go on in a situation that seems unendurable. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Eric Altmayer
Nicolas Altmayer
Screenplay
Sabrine B. Karine
Alice Vial
Adaptation/
Dialogue
Anne Fontaine
Pascal Bonitzer
Based on an
original idea by
Philippe Manila
Story inspired
by the life of
Madeleine Pauliac
Director of

Photography
Caroline Champetier
Editor
Annette Dutertre
Art Director
Joanna Macha
Original Music
Grégoire Hetzel
Sound
Olivier Mauvezin
Francis Wargnier
Jean-Pierre Laforce
Costume Designer
Katarzyna Lewinska

©Mandarin Cinéma,
Aeroplan Film,

Mars Films, France
2 Cinéma, Scope
Pictures, NC+
Production
Companies
Mandarin Cinema
presents a Mandarin
Cinéma, Aeroplan
Film, France 2
Cinéma, Mars Films,
Scope Pictures, NC+
co-production
In association with
Manon 5, Cofinova
11, La Banque Postal
Image 8, A Plus Image
6, Cinéma 9

With the participation
of Canal+, Cine+,
France Télévisions
In association with
Films Distribution,
Kino Swiat
and with the support
of Eurimages, Polish
Film Institute
A film by Anne
Fontaine
Co-financed by the
Polish Film Institute
Developed with
the support of
Groupe Ouest
With the support of

Government Federal
Belge tax shelter
via Scope Invest

Cast
Lou de Laâge
Mathilde Beaulieu
Agata Buzek
Sister Maria
Agata Kulesza
mother superior
Vincent Macaigne
Samuel Leiman
Joanna Kulig
Sister Irena
Anna Prochnicka

Sister Zofia
Helena Sujecka
Sister Ludwicka

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Picturehouse
Entertainment

French theatrical title
Les Innocentes

Poland, 1945. Responding to a nun's plea for help, French Red Cross doctor Mathilde follows her to a convent and delivers a baby to one of the sisters, Zofia. Far from being grateful, however, the Reverend Mother and Sister Maria are secretive and hostile. Mathilde discovers that another six sisters are pregnant. The Reverend Mother reveals that the convent was raided by Russian soldiers, who raped the nuns. She agrees to let Mathilde tend to them provided she tells no one. Another sister, Ludwicka, gives birth to a girl. When three more nuns go into

labour at once, Mathilde breaks her silence and asks her lover Samuel, another doctor, for help. Zofia, having discovered that the Reverend Mother left her baby and Ludwicka's in the forest to die, kills herself. Sister Maria flees the convent with the three newborns, seeking sanctuary with Mathilde and Samuel. They devise a plan to open the convent to orphans, allowing the sisters to keep the babies.

Three months later, the nuns host a joyous initiation ceremony. The Reverend Mother, stricken with syphilis as a result of the rapes, lies dying.

Into the Inferno

Director: Werner Herzog

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

It's somehow fitting that this documentary on volcanoes, Werner Herzog's most quixotically entertaining feature since 2007's *Encounters at the End of the World*, should have had its own genesis therein, when Cambridge university volcanologist Clive Oppenheimer was captured on Mount Erebus, peering towards the bubbling lava lake below. The opening credits actually list this latest offering as "a film by Werner Herzog and Clive Oppenheimer", a testament to their developing friendship and an indication that its material is shaped by the latter's book *Eruptions That Shook the World*.

Here it's actually the amiably sincere British scientist who takes the role of onscreen guide – with Herzog adding occasional musing voiceover for emphasis. Fans might wish for a bit more of Herzog's inimitable screen presence, yet the way his film exploits a roving remit to marshal a panoply of wonderment and weirdness – from mesmerising images of spurting magma, to an array of eye-popping archive footage, sundry stunning global landscapes and, yes, an Indonesian church that looks like a giant concrete chicken – manifests the distinctive combination of playful enterprise and formal rigour that is Herzog at his best.

Clearly, the idea of peeking into the molten core of the Earth itself excites and inspires him, prompting much basso profundo Russian orthodox choir music accompanying images of infernal molten rock. It's "a fire", he says, "that wants to burst forth, and it could not care less about what we're doing up here". Childlike glee and ominous foreboding, seemingly contradictory emotions, are the keynote, in part contextualised by sections from Herzog's gem-like 1977 half-hour doc *La Soufrière*, where the threat that the eponymous volcano on the island of Guadeloupe was about to explode with atom-bomb ferocity naturally drew him and his camera crew to find those brave souls who'd stayed on in the hope of meeting their maker in person.

These days Herzog's formal approach is less austere poetic, with one eye now on home audiences expecting TV-science explanation with their volcanic spectacle; today's older, wiser Herzog is also unlikely to find himself fleeing on camera from a poisonous cloud (aware of his reputation, he calls himself "the only clinically sane filmmaker"). Instead, there's aerial drone footage from a safe distance and, for startling effect, intercut clips of the terrifying close-up lava flows shot by French couple Katia and Maurice Krafft (before they lost their lives in Japan to a relentless volcanic gas cloud rampaging at roomph, seen in a terrifying TV clip).

You expect great characters in a Herzog doc, and this one doesn't disappoint. There's a stone-faced Vanuatu elder explaining a local cult based on a mythical American GI called John Frum, who promises to return one day bringing consumer goodies for all – though in the meantime he's said to live in a room inside the volcano. A marvellous shot that pulls away from a community celebration to pick out the reddish lava glow in the night sky from the nearby active peak makes it understandable how such sights could indeed inspire their



The whole truth: Werner Herzog

own belief systems. In a more modern context, Herzog elsewhere records the strenuously on-message responses of a North Korean scientist displaying unquestioning devotion to Mount Paektu as both legendary source of the Korean people and historical base of Eternal President Kim Il-sung's wartime

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

André Singer
Lucki Stipetic
Written by
Werner Herzog
Inspired by the book
Eruptions That Shook the World by Clive Oppenheimer

Director of Photography

Peter Zeitlinger

Editor

Joe Bini

Sound

Paul Paragon

Production Companies

A Netflix release of a
Spring Films Media,
Werner Herzog
Film, Matters of Fact
Media production
in association with
Dogwoof Ltd

Executive Producers

Richard Melman
Vanessa Dylln
Lisa Nishimura
Jason Spingarn-Koff
Adam Del Deo

narrator

Werner Herzog

In Colour Part-subtitled

Distributor

Dogwoof

A documentary in which Cambridge University volcanologist Clive Oppenheimer takes filmmaker Werner Herzog on a global tour to see volcanoes where magma is visible, as well as sites showing the legacy of significant past eruptions. Many of these locations are associated with local belief systems: in the Vanuatu archipelago, for instance, the people speak of a spirit within the fire; Mount Paektu in North Korea is revered as the mythical source of the Korean people; and Iceland's oldest medieval text features a volcanic creation legend. Footage of Lake Toba in Indonesia, the scene of a huge prehistoric eruption, in turn prompts a trip to Ethiopia, where the volcanic residue of obsidian proved crucial to early man for cutting tools, leaving the area fertile ground for today's archaeologists. Back in Vanuatu, a community leader predicts a future volcanic apocalypse, while Herzog's voiceover muses on the incredible potency of the molten lava under our feet.

guerrilla campaign against the Japanese invaders. Rather more personable is the gesticulating enthusiasm of Californian paleoanthropologist Timothy D. White, positively beside himself as he amasses a haul of hominid skeletal fragments in a sun-baked corner of Ethiopia where early man gathered to shape the obsidian fragments thrown out by the nearby volcano. "Luck and expertise", he says, are essential to his trade, and perhaps also to Herzog's too.

Certainly, there's good fortune involved in being on hand at the right time to shoot such valuable scientific expeditions, but also on show is Herzog's seasoned expertise in knowing when to cleave to the film's thematic through-line and when to wander off-piste, or how much is just enough from each location. From the South Pacific's Vanuatu, and thence to Indonesia and Iceland, Ethiopia and even North Korea (where Herzog is rather taken with the advert-free metro stations), the brisk geological travelogue may not offer in-depth analysis but it proves captivating and stimulating all the way through. It's augmented, of course, with what Herzog terms "the magical side – the demons, the new gods" of volcanology, including a centuries-old Indonesian sacrificial rite involving an offering of the local sultan's hair and fingernail clippings to the spirit in the mountain. Final word, though, is left to another Vanuatu community chief, musing on how the lava looks like a sea of red because the volcano will eventually erupt and destroy the world, melting it all just like water.

Now approaching his mid-seventies, Herzog has certainly had a good run in the past decade, but you do feel he'd love to be there with his camera crew for those final days. In the meantime, the intimations of apocalypse in these frames inspire a signature combination of anxiety and delight. **S**

I, Olga

Czech Republic/Poland/Slovakia/France 2016

Directors: Tomáš Weinreb, Petr Kazda

Certificate 18 105m 11s

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Whether this review of Petr Kazda and Tomáš Weinreb's joint feature debut needs a spoiler warning may depend on the reader's nationality: Czechs and Slovaks will most likely already know the narrative facts of the case of Olga Hepnarová (1951-1975), a woman as notorious in their formerly conjoined country as Ruth Ellis, Myra Hindley and Rose West are in Britain. And those facts are that on 10 July 1973, she drove a truck into a bus queue, killing eight, after sending a nihilistic personal manifesto to two newspapers. She then became the last Czech woman to be judicially executed.

But Kazda and Weinreb are less interested in reconstructing the familiar aspects of the Hepnarová case than in exploring her mental state over her final decade, gleaned from her own anguished writings (quoted verbatim) and numerous official reports, as she'd frequently been institutionalised. The film offers little chronological guidance (the dates in the attached synopsis are mostly not provided on screen), a disorientating strategy that lets us better appreciate how Olga saw herself as a permanent victim regardless of specific circumstance.

She generally gets a more sympathetic hearing from her psychiatrists than she does from her various partners (of both sexes), and appears just as repelled by the overt lesbianism in the psychiatric ward as she is by heterosexual pick-up attempts. Even as a teenager, she refuses to fall back on "social clichés", even though this exacerbates her desperate loneliness. When asked at a family meal what she wants for her birthday, her reply is "to get out of here", creating a frisson that's broken by her mother's cheerily disengaged "*Bon appétit!*"

This material could easily have been sensationalised, but Kazda and Weinreb take the opposite approach. The black-and-white images are calculatedly stripped-down, framed by a camera that's either static or permitted only the smallest reframing movement. We're locked into Olga's own tunnel-vision perspective, and when she finally commits her crime, it's shockingly matter of fact, her victims depicted as mere symbols of her oppression. Ironically, even though the official hearing belatedly grants them names, it's in a similarly dehumanising context, their deaths and injuries quantified purely in terms of monetary loss – a suggestion that the peculiarly oppressive atmosphere of



Michalina Olszanska, Marika SOPOSKÁ

Jack Reacher Never Go Back

USA/People's Republic of China 2016

Director: Edward Zwick

Certificate 12A 117m 59s

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

If the goofy sight of Tom Cruise – white T-shirt, blue jeans – punching a bad guy – wraparound shades, goatee – through a car window doesn't raise a smile, then *Jack Reacher: Never Go Back* probably isn't somewhere to go in the first place. It isn't all like that. At points this second instalment in the Reacher film series (based on Lee Child's 18th Reacher book) oddly resembles a screwball comedy.

As in the first film, army veteran Reacher is a human Littlest Hobo who goes from place to place assisting law enforcement agencies as he sees fit, not staying for long. This time around, however, he catches feelings. After helping her arrest some corrupt local cops in Virginia, he bonds over the phone with the commander of his old military police unit, Major Susan Turner (Cobie Smulders), and later encounters a teenage orphan, Samantha (Danika Yarosh), who may be his daughter. The question is whether he'll want to settle down, or keep moving on.

When he arrives in Washington DC to take Turner on a date, Reacher learns that she's been arrested for espionage and is himself framed for murdering her lawyer. Having escaped from jail and figured out who is trying to get them – military contractors Parasource, whose malfeasance Turner has been investigating – the pair take Samantha into what amounts to protective custody and hotfoot it to New Orleans to interrogate a witness, all the while being pursued by Parasource's top goon, an assassin with no name.

Notably in *Edge of Tomorrow* (2014), and to an extent in *Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation* (2015), Cruise has taken a back seat to his female co-stars, respectively Emily Blunt and Rebecca Ferguson, and the trend continues with Smulders here. Smulders is best known from the long-running sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*, and *Never Go Back* is at its best as a



Counterpuncher: Tom Cruise

comedy-thriller. A nicely anticlimactic early confrontation with the unnamed assassin ends with Reacher and Turner nursing their wounds and vowing to improve their co-ordination.

The succession of motel rooms in which they stay while on the lam brings to mind *It Happened One Night* (1934), and one might discern the undead hand of the Hays Office in the film's ambiguity over whether they're sleeping together, brought into the open when Samantha joins them. Samantha's presence also makes both Reacher and Turner, soldiers and loners both, take on unwanted parental duties, in the course of which Reacher has his residual patriarchal assumptions challenged; but there is too little time for this to develop as the action ramps up, and unfortunately Edward Zwick, best known for directing Oscar fodder, isn't much good at action.

Much of the character business is drastically compressed, possibly in the knowledge that a significant proportion of the audience will have read the books and can fill in the blanks. The result is that Reacher's decision to, as it turns out, keep moving on, and go on acting like a one-man A-Team in minor criminal cases, rather than stick around with Turner, is not easy to comprehend. ☹

post-1968 'normalisation' in Czechoslovakia was a contributing factor in Olga's mental decline.

Polish-born Michalina Olszanska made a considerable impact as a killer mermaid in Agnieszka Smoczyńska's cult hit *The Lure* (2015), but Olga Hepnarová is a far more challenging role. She's present but mostly silent in nearly every shot, mentally assuming a foetal position even while nominally remaining upright. Her cinematographer compatriot Adam Sikora's characteristically stark, spare lighting is becoming increasingly identifiable, whether in colour (Jerzy Skolimowski's *Four Nights with Anna* and *Essential Killing*) or black-and-white (Piotr Dumala's *The Forest and Ederly*), with his own directing debut, the 2010 Samuel Beckett adaptation *Expelled*, suggesting a close personal affinity with studies of the psychologically marginalised. ☹

Credits and Synopsis

Producers Marcin Kurek Sylwester Banaszkiewicz Marian Urban Vojtech Fric Petr Kazda Tomáš Weinreb	Prague, FAMU, Arizona Productions, FRAME100R Production Companies Producers: Black Balance, Media Brigade, ALEF Film & Media, love.FRAME Co-producers: Barrandov Studios, Spoon, Michel Samuelson Lighting	Film Fund from the funds of City of Wrocław and Lower Silesia Region Executive Producer Agata Walkosz
Written by Tomáš Weinreb Petr Kazda Story Roman Cilek Director of Photography Adam Sikora Editor Vojtech Fric Art Director Alexandr Kozák Sound Designers Richard Müller Petr Kapeller Costume Designer Aneta Grnáčková	Line producers: FRAME100R, ALEF Film & Media Supported by State Cinematography Fund and film incentives of State Cinematography Fund A Polish Film Institute co-financed production Financially supported by Slovak Audiovisual Fund, ODRA-Film Co-financed by Lower Silesian	Cast Michalina Olszanska Olga Hepnarová Martin Pechlát Miroslav Klára Melisková Olga's mother Marika Sopotská Jitka Juraj Nvota Anwalt Kovár Malwina Turek Marika, gypsy girl In Black & White [1.85:1] Subtitles Distributor MUBI Czech theatrical title Já, Olga HEPNAROVÁ

Prague, 1964. Following a suicide attempt, 13-year-old Olga Hepnarová is told by her mother that she lacks the willpower to kill herself. After spending her teenage years either with her coldly distant family or in a psychiatric institution (where she is badly bullied), in 1971 she moves out of the family home into a small hut in the woods. She works as a truck driver but finds it hard to relate to her mostly male and much older colleagues. She is invited out by more sympathetic colleague Jitka, and they begin a passionate lesbian relationship. However, Jitka breaks off with Olga after becoming unnerved by her unpredictable behaviour. Olga is fired from her job following an unspecified complaint. She moves into a hostel and begins relationships with Marika, a woman she meets in a bar, and Miroslav, a passer-by. He proves unusually sympathetic, but Olga's psychological withdrawal intensifies. Her request that she be hospitalised for her own protection is turned down. On 10 July 1973, after justifying her actions in writing in advance, she drives her truck into a bus queue, killing eight and wounding 12. Afterwards, since she insists that she was completely sane and that the crime was premeditated, the state has no alternative but to sentence her to death. On 12 March 1975, after a brief struggle with the prison guards, Hepnarová is hanged.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Tom Cruise Don Granger Christopher McQuarrie Screenplay Richard Wenk Edward Zwick Marshall Herskovitz Based on the book <i>Never Go Back</i> by Lee Child Director of Photography Oliver Wood Edited by Billy Weber Production Designer Clay A. Griffith Music Henry Jackman Supervising Sound Editor Mark Stoeckinger Costume Designer Lisa Nora Lovaas Stunt Co-ordinator Wade Eastwood	and Skydance present a Tom Cruise production An Edward Zwick film In association with Huahua Media, Shanghai Film Group With assistance from Louisiana Economic Development Executive Producers Paula Wagner Herbert W. Gains David Ellison Dana Goldberg Cast Tom Cruise Jack Reacher Cobie Smulders Major Susan Turner Aldis Hodge Lieutenant Espin Danika Yarosh Samantha Dutton Patrick Heusinger 'the Hunter' Holt McCallany Colonel Sam Morgan Robert Knepper General James Harkness Madalyn Horcher	Sergeant Leach Robert Catrini Colonel Moorcroft Lee Child TSA agent Austin Hébert Daniel Prudhomme Dolby Atmos In Colour [2.35:1] Distributor Paramount Pictures UK
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US, the present. Jack Reacher, an ex-army drifter, strikes up a telephone relationship with Major Susan Turner, the commanding officer of Reacher's old military police unit. When he travels to Washington DC to woo her, he learns that she has been arrested for espionage. His attempts to aid her defence end in him being framed for her lawyer's murder. In the meantime he faces a paternity suit from a woman he doesn't remember meeting. Reacher and Turner escape from jail and go on the run. With secret help from Turner's staff, they deduce that a military contractor, Parasource, is responsible for framing them, and for an attempt on the life of Reacher's putative daughter Samantha. Taking Samantha with them, they follow a lead to New Orleans, pursued by Parasource assassins. They track down a former Parasource employee, who tells them that during the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Parasource sold US-bound arms to warlords. Reacher and Turner go to a local airbase to intercept a Parasource shipment of what they expect to be empty crates, and find instead opium. The military police arrest Parasource's CEO. Meanwhile Parasource's main assassin tracks down Samantha. Reacher and Turner arrive in time to fight and kill him.

Turner resumes her duties. Reacher goes back on the road. Although it is revealed that Samantha is not his daughter, he enrolls her in a private school and establishes a tentative paternal relationship with her.

Magnus

Norway/Denmark 2016
Director: Benjamin Ree
Certificate U 78m 20s

Reviewed by Jasper Sharp

This feature-length production from Norwegian documentary-maker Benjamin Ree unfolds as a compelling albeit straightforward triumph-of-the-underdog narrative in its account of the trials and tribulations of the 'Mozart of Chess' Magnus Carlsen and his life leading up to his 2013 victory over reigning champion Viswanathan 'Vishy' Anand at the World Chess Championship in Chennai.

In 2004, the then 13-year-old made international headlines after drawing in his first game against Garry Kasparov in Reykjavik, that same year becoming the third youngest chess Grandmaster in history. Ree reprises footage first featured in his earlier TV documentary *Magnus Carlsen's Last Big Title* (made in 2013 during the run-up to Carlsen's climactic face-off with Anand) of another media landmark in Carlsen's astonishing ascent, in which he trounces ten top-ranking lawyers at Harvard University against whom he is playing simultaneously and blindfolded.

However, Carlsen's story is largely framed through the eyes of his closest family, as the film makes use of a wealth of home-movie footage accompanied by personal recollections of his childhood from his father Henrik and sisters Ellen, Ingrid and Signe. (Save for an early appearance in a home video of a hiking trip in 1994, Carlsen's mother Sigrun Oen is curiously absent.) It is Henrik who dominates the narrative, describing Magnus as a bright yet reclusive boy unable to form close social relationships, who would spend hours lying on his back simply staring at the ceiling. Observing the four-year-old Magnus single-mindedly struggling for six hours to complete a Lego train, and picking up on his extraordinary capacity for abstract thought and pattern recognition, Henrik began to channel his son's talents into chess and was soon chaperoning him to competitions across the country, and later internationally.

Henrik's nurturing role in the young Carlsen's professional and emotional development is conveyed succinctly in the relaxed scenes of father-son bonding during their various



Lord of the board: Magnus Carlsen

international competition trips. We learn, though, that this constant travelling throughout his formative years, coupled with his innate social maladroitness, diverted Carlsen's focus from his school work and marked him out as a target for bullying. Childhood scenes of Carlsen laughing at a sister's birthday party point to a happier home life, and it is clear that the emotional buffer provided by his family is a crucial component in his success. An early home movie of the family enjoying celebratory ice creams during the Iceland tournament is echoed by the intimate sequence of them relaxing and playing cards in their Chennai hotel room before the decisive head-to-head with Anand almost ten years later.

If the overall tone tends towards the hagiographic, this is largely inherent in the intrinsically uncinematic nature of the subject matter. Chess makes for a pretty impenetrable spectator sport for those not au fait with its in-game dynamics. Ree to some extent gets around this by keeping things moving at a brisk pace, but beyond the furrowed brows of the competitors and brief flurries of activity on the board, the film relies on the external commentary of archive TV footage and onscreen text to provide evidence of who is actually winning in the battles of minds that mark Carlsen's rise through the rankings.

Carlsen too comes across as less than effusive. At one point, sister Ellen describes how his fixation with chess often makes him incredibly difficult to communicate with, since he regularly drops out of conversations as his mind works through configurations on imaginary chessboards. While the film hints that Carlsen is somewhere on the autistic spectrum, Ree holds back on psychologising possible reasons behind his preternatural talent or investigating his inner thought processes during play. During a post-mortem analysis after a foolhardy manoeuvre costs him a crucial game, a despondent Carlsen glumly claims that losing your intuition in chess is like losing the ability of language. It's a remark that leads to one of the film's few conspicuous instances of dramatic reconstruction – in swirling handheld camerawork, we see Carlsen tossing and turning in his hotel bed as he is racked with insomnia for several nights. It is the deepest insight we get into the complex interior world he inhabits. 

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children

USA/United Kingdom 2016, Director: Tim Burton
Certificate 12A 126m 42s

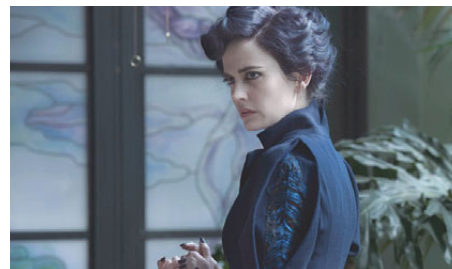
Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children appears so immediately Tim Burton-esque that it's a surprise to find that this latest film from the director is an adaptation of a young-adult novel by Ransom Riggs. Burton's sugared-gothic landscape of artfully jagged edges, as typified by *Edward Scissorhands* (1990), is back, set against glowering skies and populated with blue-eyed cuties and clattering ghouls, but here it's transplanted to soggy Britain. From flat American suburbia, Jake (Asa Butterfield), travels to a craggy Welsh island to visit the quirky children's home where his grandfather (a wild-eyed but rather touching Terence Stamp) spent the first part of the Second World War.

The children are Peculiars, little 1940s steampunk X-Men with special gifts. Blonde sweetheart Emma (Ella Purnell) is lighter than air, Hugh is filled with bees, Olive's hands ignite anything they touch, tiny Bronwyn is preternaturally strong, and the twins hide their toxic features behind eerie flour-sack bodysuits. Enoch, the most malevolent, is a teenage Frankenstein, with a talent for corpse puppetry, prompting a delightfully gruesome (and very Tim Burton) interlude in which contraptions made of doll parts and shellfish duel in his lab. His aptitude unleashes the film's highlight: a preposterous skeleton army à la Ray Harryhausen doing battle on Blackpool's pier.

Mistress of the house is the serene and eccentric Miss Peregrine, a woman-bird hybrid Peculiar known as an Ymbryne, played with cut-glass precision by Eva Green. The Ymbrynes, all female, are the caregivers of the Peculiar universe, though Peregrine is not traditionally maternal, dispatching her duties with a pipe and a crossbow. The home is in constant peril, for two reasons. First, it is reliving one day in its history in a time loop – the day it was blitzed in 1943. The residents gather on the lawn in their gas masks and watch Miss Peregrine's fob watch spin back 24 hours at the moment the bomb hovers overhead. Second, the children are at risk from Hollowgasts: eyeless, dagger-toothed giants with bone-spears for limbs, sent by villains called Wights (led by a camp, white-haired Samuel L. Jackson) to harvest their eyeballs.

That the film, burdened as it is with a complex time-travel plot and all this chewy jargon, emerges as a joyful children's adventure is testament to Jane Goldman's light-footed script and some elaborate visuals. The showstoppers include a crusty, barnacled ocean liner, grisly eyeball-feasts and a creepy reanimated teenage corpse. The balance of sickening and sweet in the look of the film is exemplified



Blitz spirits: Eva Green

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Sigurd Mikal
Karoliusen

Written by

Linn-Jeanette Kyed
Benjamin Ree
After an idea by
Martin Jondahl

Filmed by

Magnus Flato
Benjamin Ree
Oyvind Asbjørnsen

Editors

Martin Stoltz
Perry Eriksen
Original Music

Uno Helmersson

Sound Design
Frederic Vogel

©Moskus Film AS

Production

Companies

Moskus Film

presents in

association with

VGTV, Main Island

Production,

Nordisk Film

With support from

The Norwegian Film

Institute, Nordisk

Film & TV Fond, The

Fritt Ord Foundation

A film by

Benjamin Ree

Executive

Producers

Aage Aaberge

Oyvind Asbjørnsen

In Colour

[1.78:1]

Part-subtitled

Distributor

Arrow Films

A documentary portrait of Norwegian chess champion Magnus Carlsen, who in 2004, at the age of 13, became the third youngest Grandmaster in history. Using archive news footage, home videos and interviews with his family, the film charts his ascent from shy and withdrawn child to his triumph, at the age of 22, at the 2013 World Chess Championship.

M.S. Dhoni The Untold Story

Director: Neeraj Pandey
Certificate PG 184m 11s

Reviewed by Naman Ramachandran

There has been a glut of sports biopics from Bollywood in recent years, including *Paan Singh Tomar* (2012), about the steeplechase champion turned bandit; *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*, (2013), about sprinter Milkha Singh; *Mary Kom* (2014), about the eponymous boxer; and *Azhar* (2016), about former Indian cricket captain Mohammad Azharuddin. Of these, only *Mary Kom* was released while the sportsperson in question was still active. Neeraj Pandey's *M.S. Dhoni: The Untold Story* falls into this category, since Mahendra Singh Dhoni continues to captain the Indian cricket team in the One Day International and Twenty20 formats.

Given that the film was made with the blessing of Dhoni and co-produced by his old friend and business associate Arun Pandey (no relation to Neeraj), it was never going to be a warts-and-all portrait of the cricketer. The film addresses none of the controversies associated with Dhoni, and the only issue it does – the dropping of three senior cricketers from the team for matches in the shorter format – is mentioned without naming names. Throughout his directorial career, from *A Wednesday!* (2008) to *Special 26* (2013) and *Baby* (2015), Neeraj Pandey has eschewed Bollywood tropes in favour of a tale well told, and *M.S. Dhoni* is no different. Pandey fashions a rousing, inspirational narrative from the fairytale story of a young man of humble origins from small-town India rising to become captain of the team that won the 2011 cricket World Cup for a grateful nation, a holy grail not seen since 1983.

Where Pandey scores is the meticulous recreation of small-town India and the depiction of the family and friends who were Dhoni's support system and instrumental in his breaking into the big time. All the spaces in these parts of the film look authentic and lived in, and the people's joy in their ward's every success seems heartfelt. Pandey also successfully conveys the frustration that Dhoni feels in the early years, when his career stalls while his contemporaries



Test case: Sushant Singh Rajput

make it into the national team. In this Pandey is aided by a tremendous performance from Sushant Singh Rajput. It isn't easy to live a part when the real-life person looms from billboards and is on television all the time – Dhoni is an all-pervasive presence in India – but Rajput pulls it off with élan. His mimicking of the real Dhoni's body language is impressive, though for the cricket itself Pandey superimposes Rajput's face on Dhoni's in real match footage. He wisely ends on a euphoric note – Dhoni's World Cup-winning six – as the Indian team and Dhoni haven't scaled those heights since. **S**

by a young Peculiar whose bouncing ringlets conceal a second mouth on the back of her head: a ravenous gape with sharp gnashers.

The cuteness isn't always comfortable. The Peculiars are a minority, persecuted because of their genetic variation, and the Hollowgast name hints at the real reason these children were sent to Britain. The grandfather's story is dismissed as a coping technique to bury his memory of being a refugee, but *Miss Peregrine* refuses to engage with this historical horror story – a time when, as Jake says, some people in Europe became monsters. Butterfield's quiet diffidence allows the fantastic elements to take over, distracting the children from the real nightmares of 1943. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Peter Chernin Jenno Topping	Production Companies Twentieth Century Fox presents in association with TSG Entertainment a Chernin Entertainment production	Emma Judi Dench Miss Avocet Samuel L. Jackson Barron
Screenplay Jane Goldman Based upon the novel written by Ransom Riggs	Director of Photography Bruno Delbonnel	Kim Dickens Jake's mom O-Lan Jones Shelley
Film Editor Chris Lebenzon	Produced in association with Ingenious Media	Finlay MacMillan Enoch
Production Designer Gavin Bocquet	Executive Producers Derek Frey Katterli Frauenfelder Nigel Gostelow Ivana Lombardi	Lauren McCrostie Olive Georgia Pemberton Fiona
Music Mike Higham Matthew Margeson	Cast Eva Green Miss Peregrine Asa Butterfield Jacob Portman, 'Jake' Chris O'Dowd Frank Allison Janney Dr Golan Rupert Everett ornithologist Terence Stamp Abe Ella Purnell	Milo Parker Hugh Pixie Davies Bronwyn Hayden Keeler-Stone Horace Cameron King Millard Raffiella Chapman Claire
Sound Mixer Tony Dawe	Dolby Atmos In Colour [1.85:1]	
Costume Designer Colleen Atwood	Some screenings presented in 3D	
Visual Effects Double Negative Scanline FX MPC Rodeo FX One of Us	Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)	
Stunt Co-ordinator Rowley Irlam		
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Teenager Jake lives in Florida. His grandfather Abe has always told him about his magical friends from the Second World War. When Abe dies in mysterious circumstances, Jake travels to the Welsh island where Abe spent the war. Jake learns that the children's home where Abe lived was bombed on 3 September 1943 and that all the occupants died, Abe having left to join the army by that time. However, the children aren't dead but caught in a time loop, reliving the same day repeatedly until the moment the bomb drops. Jake learns that the children, including Abe's sweetheart Emma, are all 'Peculiars': the headmistress, Miss Peregrine, is an Ymbryne (part human, part bird) tasked with their care. Jake discovers that he is also a Peculiar: his power is that he can see the Hollowgasts (invisible monsters) sent by the evil Wights to raid time loops and harvest Peculiars' eyeballs. Mr Barron, the Wights' leader, follows Jake to the island and kidnaps Miss Peregrine, leaving the children to fend off a Hollowgast, forcing them out of their loop. To save Miss Peregrine and return to their time, the children raise a sunken ocean liner and sail it to Blackpool, where they defeat the Wights and their Hollowgasts on the pier. Having prevented Abe's death, Jake returns to his own time. Abe urges him to travel the world via time loops to be with Emma, which he does.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Arun Pandey	Sunil Babu	Falguni Thakore	Star Studios A Neeraj Pandey film	Anupam Kher Pan Singh Dhoni Herry Tangri Yuvraj Singh Disha Patani Priyanka Jha Bhumika Chawla Jayanti Gupta, sister Neeta Mohindra Devaki Devi, mother Rajesh Sharma	coach
Screenplay Dilip Jha	Songs Music Amaal Mallik Rochak Kohli	Production Companies Fox Star Studios presents an Inspired Entertainment production in association with Friday Filmworks Produced by Fox	Cast Sushant Singh Rajput Mahendra Singh 'M.S.' Dhoni Kiara Advani Sakshi Dhoni	In Colour Subtitles	
Director of Photography Sudhir Palasane	Lyrics Manoj Muntashir			Distributor 20th Century Fox International (UK)	
Editor Shree Narayan Singh	Background Music Sanjoy Chowdhury				
Production Designer	Sound Debashish Mishra Costume Designer				

Ranchi, India, 1981. Mahendra is born to pump operator Pan Singh Dhoni and his wife Devaki. The boy is a promising football and badminton player. After observing Mahendra's goalkeeping skills, the school sports coach asks him to try out for the cricket team as a wicketkeeper. Mahendra is an instant success as a keeper; eventually the coach also gives him batting opportunities. Though Mahendra is doing well at cricket, his father insists he continue his studies so that he can get a secure government job. Encouraged by a group of loyal friends, Mahendra excels at grade cricket, but he continues to languish at the local level while his contemporaries make it into the Indian team. In 2001, at his father's behest, Mahendra accepts a job as a ticket collector

on the railways. He quits after two years to concentrate on cricket. Finally, an officer of the Indian cricket board's small-town talent-spotting team sees Mahendra play and he is picked for a tour of Zimbabwe and Kenya. He performs well and makes his One Day International debut against Bangladesh. His debut goes badly, however. He subsequently meets Priyanka and, encouraged by her, scores 100 against Pakistan. Priyanka dies in a road accident. Mahendra meets and marries Sakshi. Mahendra's effigies are burnt in Ranchi after India's early exit from the 2007 World Cup. He becomes vice-captain and then captain of the Indian team. In 2007, he leads India to victory in the inaugural ICC World Twenty20; four years later he leads the team to victory in the World Cup.

My Feral Heart

United Kingdom 2015
Director: Jane Gull
Certificate 12A 82m 50s

Reviewed by Jasper Sharp

With its opening shot, framed tightly on a young man's face as he shaves and preens playfully in the bathroom mirror, it is clear from the outset that Luke, the focus of Jane Gull's assured and charming feature debut, has Down's syndrome. However, *My Feral Heart* never asks for audience sympathy for his condition, just his situation, as he throws open the curtains to face a bright new day with a cheery "Morning world!" before laying breakfast out on a tray, drawing a smiley face on the boiled egg and carrying it upstairs to the elderly mother reliant on his care, then chirpily heading out to the shops.

Luke is evidently independent and resourceful, with little to suggest that he can't look after himself, but his mother's quiet passing in her sleep puts a sudden halt to this intimate domestic set-up, as Luke is uprooted and placed in a care home. His carer Eve is a perky ray of sunshine in the otherwise cold corridors of the inaptly named Blossom House, but Luke nonetheless feels overwhelmed and ill at ease within the institutionalised confines of his new home, and seeks solace in surreptitious forays into the surrounding countryside. Initially suspicious of his absences, Eve appears to turn a blind eye, even allowing Luke the occasional unsupervised shopping trip into the nearby town and letting him help out Pete, the young groundsman at the care home.

The landscapes through which Luke roams are suffused with the muted greys and long shadows of late autumn, with Susanne Salavati's poetic cinematography situating us firmly in his world, isolating details such as the dried remnants of hedgerow plants long gone to seed, or fallen leaves and blades of grass teased by the wind. The style calls to mind a very British strain of dreamlike pastoral naturalism familiar from the likes of Ken Loach's *Kes* (1969), Shane Meadows's *Dead Man's Shoes* (2004) and Andrea Arnold's



Unwelcome home: Steven Brandon

Fish Tank (2009). It lends an almost otherworldly dimension, too, to the subplot in which Luke finds a teenage girl lying unconscious in a field, with the vivid glare of sunlight picking out individual strands of cobwebs at the deserted barn where he secretly nurses her back to health.

Gull coaxes captivating and convincing performances from all cast members, and Duncan Pavelev's script builds with a quietly confident momentum, subtly fleshing out Pete's backstory through his growing relationships with Luke and Eve, steadily accumulating details of a privileged upbringing blighted by tragedy. Less credible are revelations of Pete's involvement in a local anti-hunt activist group, which bring a note of dramatic contrivance to the film's closing quarter. And it's a shame the film ends so abruptly, with many plot threads unresolved. It is never revealed, for instance, who the mysterious teenage girl is, or how she ended up where Luke found her. Ultimately we are left wanting to know what will become of Luke – and also hoping to see more from the enchanting performer, Steven Brandon, whose guileless presence provides so much of the film's well-meaning heart. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
James Rumsey
Duncan Pavelev
Jane Gull

Written by
Duncan Pavelev

Director of Photography
Susanne Salavati

Editor
Benjamin Gerstein

Production Design
Christian Taylor

Music Composed by
Barrington Pheloung

Supervising Sound Editor
Christopher Wilson

Costume Designer
Jennifer Gardiner

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Production Companies
Dull Boy Pictures
presents a Rum Jam Films production

Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
Gavin Thain
Kirk Wells

Roger Bassett
Neil Fitzgerald
Peter O'Neill
Luis Sanchez
Gary Phillips
Mark Vennis
Kirsty Bell

Cast
Steven Brandon
Luke
Shana Swash
Eve
Will Rastall
Pete
Pixie Le Knot
the girl
Eileen Pollock
Joan, Luke's mother
Suzanna Hamilton
Margaret, Pete's mother
Keith Chanter
William, Pete's father
Kerryann White
social worker
Jill Keen
Yvonne
Andrew St
Clair James
doctor
Rachael Cox

Director of Photography
Susanne Salavati

Editor
Benjamin Gerstein

Production Design
Christian Taylor

Music Composed by
Barrington Pheloung

Supervising Sound Editor
Christopher Wilson

Costume Designer
Jennifer Gardiner

©My Feral Heart Limited

Production Companies
Dull Boy Pictures
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Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
Gavin Thain
Kirk Wells

Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
Gavin Thain
Kirk Wells

Jenny Lewis Nicolas
Charlie
Joe Gooch
community payback supervisor
Darren Kent
Sam
Ian Spashett
lead hunt saboteur
Gareth Watkins
Derek, burly hunt steward

In Colour

Distributor
OurScreen

Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
Gavin Thain
Kirk Wells

Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
Gavin Thain
Kirk Wells

Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
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Kirk Wells

Executive Producers
Gareth Stanley
Gavin Thain
Kirk Wells

Luke, a young man with Down's syndrome, lives with his aged mother, attending to her every need. When she dies, he is moved into the Blossom House care home, where a young woman called Eve is assigned to be his carer. Accustomed to his independence, Luke is frustrated by the rules of his new home and collapses wheezing after he is forcefully barred from going out to the shops on his first morning. The doctor tells him he has a hole in the heart and should take things easy. Over the following days, Luke takes to sneaking out into the surrounding countryside. On one such excursion, he finds a teenage girl lying unconscious in a field. He takes her to an abandoned barn and secretly nurses her back to health. Returning from one of his visits to the barn, he encounters Pete, the care home's groundsman, who provides him with an alibi for his absence when Eve sees them chatting. Luke starts helping Pete out on a regular basis. He grows in confidence through their friendship, but Pete harbours secrets of his own, including his activities as a hunt saboteur. While out walking, Luke sees Pete with his anti-hunt activists and asks to join them. Pete reluctantly concedes, before getting into a fight with one of the hunt supporters. Luke flees to the barn and, finding the girl unconscious, runs for help, carrying her across the fields before collapsing. Eve and Pete discover Luke with the girl tending to him. Eve rushes to seek help.

The New Man.

United Kingdom 2016
Directors: Josh Appignanesi, Devorah Baum

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

"Am I going to fuck it up completely – are all my worst tendencies going to be flushed out in this vortex of self-immolation?" muses writer-director Josh Appignanesi (*Song of Songs*, *The Infidel*), faced with the prospect of becoming a father for the first time at the age of 38. Whether Josh talks like this all the time, or just when there's a camera pointing at him, is a question that arises more than once during this confessional-style documentary, jointly written and directed by him and his wife Devorah Baum. A good many scenes feel blatantly scripted, not least an early episode where the two of them, shot only from the waist down, lament their failure to start a family despite multiple fertility treatments. And at one point, as they stroll through the park, we see only their shadows on the path ahead of them and hear them discussing whether to restage a particular conversation. Which leads to the receding-mirrors conundrum: is this discussion of a restaging itself a restaging?

If you can get past this, and tolerate Josh's relentlessly demanding self-pity (Devorah at one stage confides that she only agreed to the extended home-movie project on the grounds that it would "be good for him and I should play along"), there's much entertainment to be derived from the interplay between the couple and their various friends and extended families. Nobody is identified in captions, but the interlocutors include Sophie Fiennes, Antony Gormley, Zadie Smith and Slavoj Žižek – who suggests that the notorious breakfast-table scene in *Alien* is a fair representation of the trauma of pregnancy. Josh seeks advice from his long-since divorced parents: his mother, the writer Lisa Appignanesi (author of *Mad, Bad and Sad: Women and the Mind Doctors*); and his father,



What to expect: Devorah Baum

Ouija Origin of Evil

USA/Japan 2016
Director: Mike Flanagan
Certificate 15 98m 55s

Reviewed by Kim Newman

With *Paranormal Activity*, *A Haunting in Connecticut*, *Sinister*, *Insidious* and *The Conjuring* spawning franchises, and (thus far tentative) returns from progenitors such as *The Amityville Horror* and *Poltergeist*, the American ghost story is currently thriving. Even a film as ordinary as Stiles White's *Ouija* (2014) was successful enough to earn a second outing. Various parties with a stake in the property—including Hasbro (owners of the ouija board brand), Blumhouse (the outfit behind an enormous number of low-budget genre pictures) and Platinum Dunes (Michael Bay's house of recycled ideas)—have taken the inspired step of hiring the up-and-coming Mike Flanagan to co-write and direct the *Ouija* prequel, which turns out to be better than anyone might have expected.

With *Absentia* (2011), *Oculus* (2013) and *Hush* (2016), Flanagan has developed a distinctive style and staked out a set of thematic interests—*Absentia* and *Oculus* are both about families split by supernatural occurrences and coming uncomfortably together when the haunting persists, while *Hush* is an expert suspense film on the *Wait Until Dark* model, with a deaf woman menaced in her home by a killer. Annalise Basso, who played the younger version of Karen Gillan's character in *Oculus*, returns as the central player here—and turns out to be the younger version of the institutionalised character played by Lin Shaye in *Ouija* (with Shaye returning after the end credits for a brief cameo).

A credibly awkward teen, Basso's Lina has interesting, ambiguous relationships with her widowed mother Alice (who is paradoxically a sincere con woman) and openly haunted little sister Doris (who will become the big bad of *Ouija*). Early on, Lina tells her comically timid friends how spiritualism works—explaining away apparent revelations as simple deductions and generalities—and she is at once sceptical about the real ghost that shows up (never believing as her sister and mother do that it's her dead father) and alert to a sinister side to the apparent benefits of the ouija board (money in the walls, satisfied clients, closure or grief).

Like the *Annabelle* and *Conjuring* films, this takes place in the relatively recent past, and Flanagan makes comparatively subtle use of



Sister act: Lulu Wilson

period touches (moon shots and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* reruns on television) to establish a more trusting time, when what to contemporary audiences are obvious ill omens can be viewed ambiguously. It's a double bluff that some supporting characters—Parker Mack as Lina's love interest, Henry Thomas as a widowed priest who has some rapport with Lina's bogus-medium mom (Elizabeth Reaser)—make the audience suspicious but turn out to be decent if doomed, with Mack only becoming a menace, in a well-timed shock, after he has been hanged by an oily-looking mouthless ghost (mimed by Doug Jones, a frequent mope or in-a-suit monster player for Guillermo del Toro).

What distinguishes Flanagan's work from formulaic franchise-furthering is his manifest sincerity. He delivers the scares and shocks expected in this sort of thing, with an escalation from false jumps (a parent comes home early and walks into a tense ouija session, setting the kids screaming) through edge-of-the-frame creepiness (figures glimpsed through the fisheye glass of the ouija's planchette) to CGI-assisted flesh-stretching as Doris's mouth gaps unnaturally wide, elongating her whole face. But he adds value in well-written, underplayed scenes that tease out the human hurts of characters caught up in ghostly business—as Lina, already upset by her father's death, finds herself edged out of the magic circle formed by her mother, sister and an unspecified ghost... or when Alice dresses up as if for a date for a meeting with the priest and is quietly disappointed when he only wants to talk about spiritual concerns. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

A film by [i.e. Directed/ Produced/Shot/ Edited by]	association with Met Film A film by Josh Appignanesi & Deborah Baum	[178:1]
Josh Appignanesi Deborah Baum	Supported by Wellcome Trust, MetFilm, Together Films, The Chairman's Trust	Distributor The Creative Life Film Company
Sound Designer/ Re-recording Mixer Vince Watts	Executive Producers David Baddiel Charlie Phillips Cavan Ash	
©The Creative Life Film Company Ltd	Production Companies The Creative Life Film Company presents in	In Colour

London, 2013. Writer-director Josh Appignanesi and his wife Deborah Baum have been married for three years but, despite several fertility treatments, are still childless. Deborah, who's in her late thirties, fears that they have left it too late. When she finds she's pregnant, they're both overjoyed, and decide to make a joint film about the process. But as the pregnancy progresses, Josh starts to wonder if he can ever be an adequate father, or whether the baby will take over their lives and monopolise Deborah's affections. Some of his male friends abet these feelings. Deborah for her part feels as if her intellectual powers are being eroded. Both consult their parents, their analysts and friends about their fears.

In the 20th week of the pregnancy, Josh goes to Spain with some friends, and is away when Deborah learns that she's carrying twins. A few weeks later, when he's back, they're told that one of the two infants (both boys) will be born dead. At 32 weeks, Deborah starts experiencing continuous pain, and feels she's being 'judged'. In December 2013 she gives birth at University College Hospital. The live baby is named Emanuel. Ben Adam, born dead, is given a funeral.

One year later, Deborah celebrates her 40th birthday and Emanuel's first. Josh reveals that his father was suffering from terminal lung cancer, but hadn't told him until the pregnancy reached its term.

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Michael Bay Andrew Form Brad Fuller Jason Blum Brian Goldner Stephen Davis	game 'Ouija' Director of Photography Michael Fimognari Edited by Mike Flanagan Production Designer Patricio M. Farrell Music The Newton Brothers Production Sound Mixer Robert Eber Costume Designer	Lynn Falconer ©Universal Studios Production Companies Universal Pictures presents a Platinum Dunes/Blumhouse production in association with Allspark Pictures A Mike Flanagan film Presented in association with
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Los Angeles, 1967. Widow Alice Zander supports her daughters Lina and Doris by holding bogus seances, but when she buys a ouija board as a prop, young Doris uses it to contact real spirits in their house—at first believing that she's in touch with her dead father. When Alice is about to lose the house to the bank, Doris finds money hidden in the walls—but Lina is disturbed by her

Dentsu Inc./ Fuji Television Network, Inc. Executive Producers Couper Samuelson Jeanette Volturmo Trevor Macy Victor Ho	Paulina Zander, 'Lina' Lulu Wilson Doris Zander Parker Mack Mikey Henry Thomas Father Tom Halle Charlton Ellie Alexis G. Zall Betty Lin Shaye Lina Zander (2013) Doug Jones	ghoul Marcus/ Devil's Doctor Dolby Digital Colour by DeLuxe [1.85:1] Distributor Universal Pictures International UK & Ire
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sister's supernatural activities, which include writing pages in Polish that show the house to be haunted by the victims of a Nazi occultist who tortured them in a secret basement. Father Tom, a concerned priest, is killed trying to help the family. Lina tries to stop the possessed Doris by sewing her mouth shut. Influenced by the ghosts, Lina kills her mother and is institutionalised.

Paterson

USA/Germany/France 2016
Director: Jim Jarmusch

See Feature
on page 16

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson* is a quietly utopian film, and a balm to watch. Paterson (Adam Driver), bus driver and apparently contentedly unpublished poet, and Laura (Golshifteh Farahani), aspiring country singer, live modestly in the suburbs of Paterson, New Jersey, encouraging one another in their dreams but never pushing too hard. Paterson's repetitive job leaves him headspace to compose poems while at work; Laura, who doesn't work, is less focused but happy to experiment. In the evenings, Paterson goes to a bar with a largely black clientele, presided over by Doc (Barry Shabaka Henley), a proud Patersonian who refuses to install a television and knows just enough of everyone's business. Exultant after a successful day selling cakes at a farmers' market, Laura exclaims: "This is so much fun, it's like we're living in the 20th century."

Indeed, *Paterson*'s minimal narrative and attractively downbeat setting hark back to the Jarmusch of the 80s and 90s. The action, such as it is, unfolds in uncluttered images at an unhurried pace over seven days in Paterson's life, each a variation on the last. The bus journeys are given time to breathe, and the most dramatic subplot, concerning two fellow regulars at the bar, happily fizzles out. But the film can't help but generate suspense – will something happen, and will Paterson publish his poems?

Sharing Doc's pride in a place that most people outside the US have never heard of, *Paterson*'s small scale is deceptive. Fragments of the city's past pepper the film, touching on the whole history of the republic. The city's rich literary heritage, above all the work of modernist poet William Carlos Williams and his long-gestated 'Paterson', is paraded throughout. In earlier Jarmusch films, poetry was the preserve of outsiders – Roberto Benigni, the fan of Whitman and Frost in *Down by Law* (1986), and Nobody (Gary Farmer), the Native American Blake aficionado in *Dead Man* (1995) – while the white Americans remained ignorant. *Paterson* includes a cameo from Nagase Masatoshi, who played the Carl Perkins fan from Yokohama in *Mystery Train* (1989), this time on a pilgrimage to the waterfall that Williams used as a leitmotif, and where Paterson eats his lunch.

Crucially, however, Paterson is not the only poet or reader in Paterson. On his travels he encounters a rapper (played by Method Man) in a launderette and a young girl poet who shares his liking for Emily Dickinson. Doc curates a Paterson hall of fame behind the bar. Moreover, the life of the city, seen through the windscreen, and its inhabitants, heard from the driver's seat, are invested with poetry, cast into a form one could call poetic; and the film is filled with visual patterns, especially in Laura's domain, the home. Whether or not Paterson's poetry is worthy of publication, and whether or not Laura, in Nashville mode, will be one of "the greats", as she puts it, isn't the point; poetry (broadly understood) isn't about worldly success, and dreams don't need to come true to be worth having. Culture is ordinary, as Raymond Williams put it.

But, well, is it? Jarmusch's last film, *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), seemed to bring down the curtain



Poetic driver's licence: Golshifteh Farahani, Adam Driver

on a cultural tradition whose exhaustion was manifest in the film itself, with its fetishisation of old guitars and vinyl, and its affected aesthetic snobbery was equally palpable. *Paterson*, Jarmusch's best film since *Ghost Dog* (1999), might be seen as an attempt to start over, but there is no escaping the fact that Paterson the unsung poet is the invention of a much sung filmmaker, or that Paterson is post-industrial America as seen from the Lower East Side. Paterson's earnest refusal to use a mobile phone reveals an otherwise unlikely kinship with Adam Driver's character from Noah Baumbach's *While We're Young* (2014), a send-up of the hipster technophobia indulged in by *Only Lovers Left Alive*.

Like many utopias, *Paterson* is sexless. Laura and Paterson are just adorable together, when they are together, but nothing more. Their domestic routine is resolutely 20th-century, with Laura deprived of company and confined to the home during the day, decorating and baking and taking up hobbies, and during the evening too. Paterson's artistic pretensions, even if disavowed, are treated with more seriousness than hers, which are made to appear kooky. One scene even makes fun of her cooking. Farahani's performance, of great charm and exuberance, conceals a fundamental repression; and it might be that this repression is itself the necessary condition of all such utopias. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Joshua Astrachan
Carter Logan

Written by
Jim Jarmusch

Poems
Ron Padgett

Original Spoken Word
Method Man

Director of Photography
Frederick Elmes

Editor
Affonso Gonçalves

Production Designer
Mark Friedberg

Music
SQÜRL

Sound Designer
Robert Hein

Costume Designer
Catherine George

©Inkjet Inc.
Production Companies
K5 International and
Amazon Studios

present in association
with Le Pacte an
Inkjet production

A film by Jim
Jarmusch

Produced in
association with
Animal Kingdom
Executive Producers
Oliver Simon
Daniel Baur
Ron Bozman
Jean Labadie

Cast

Adam Driver
Paterson

Golshifteh Farahani
Laura

Barry Shabaka
Henley

Doc
Cliff Smith

[I.e. Method Man]
Method Man

Chasten Harmon
Marie

William Jackson
Harper

Everett
Nagase Masatoshi

Japanese poet
Nellie

Marvin
Rizwan Manji

Donny
Donny

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor
Soda Pictures

Seven days in the life of Paterson, poet and bus driver in the city of Paterson, New Jersey. Paterson lives with Laura. He goes to work in the morning, composes poems while driving, eats a packed lunch by Passaic Falls, comes home in the evening, writes in his basement and eats the dinner that Laura has prepared. Laura encourages Paterson to publish his poems, and makes him promise to photocopy them at the weekend. She in turn expresses her aspirations – to run a cupcake company, to be a country singer – and he encourages her. On Thursday, she wins a spot at the farmers' market that weekend, for which she bakes a batch of cakes.

After dinner, Paterson takes Marvin, their English bulldog, for a walk, leaving him outside a local bar while he has a drink. On the Friday, Paterson's bus breaks down, and in the evening Everett, an actor who refuses to accept that his relationship with Marie, another regular, is over, pulls a gun on himself in the bar. Paterson disarms him and the gun proves to be a toy. The next day, Laura does well at the market, and the couple celebrate by going out for dinner and seeing an old movie. While they're out, Marvin chews up Paterson's poems, which he has not yet photocopied. On Sunday, Paterson goes for a walk, encountering Everett, who apologises, and, at Passaic Falls, a Japanese tourist with whom he talks about poetry.

On Monday, having been given a new notebook by the tourist, Paterson carries on.

Rupture

Director: Steven Shainberg
Certificate 15 101m 21s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"Don't be scared," says an unseen Margot down the phone to her work colleague Renee (Noomi Rapace). They are meeting later that weekend, hoping to confront their fears and have a transformative experience on a skydiving trip. In fact, Renee – an independent, resourceful divorcee bringing up her teen son Evan (Percy Hynes White) almost entirely by herself – seems pretty fearless. The opening sequence of *Rupture*, however, reveals her Achilles heel, as we see her reduced to near catatonic terror by a spider in the bathroom. The sense of anxiety is increased not only by Nathan Larson's creepily shrill score and the background radio discussion of environmental damage and global warming, but also by an occasional shift to high-angle black-and-white shots of the house's interiors via hidden, intradiegetic cameras. We are not the only ones observing Renee and Evan.

After dropping Evan off at his father's, Renee is abducted, and finds herself prisoner in a squalid, red-lit facility (with wallpaper borrowed from the distinctive carpet pattern in *The Shining*). There, a team of researchers are conducting strange medical experiments on Renee and several other captives, hoping to induce in their patients an effect known as 'rupture'. As Renee struggles to escape her bonds and get back home to her beloved Evan, *Rupture* plays out mostly like a mystery, though there are also elements of horror: in particular, the chained-up women (and men) familiar from 'torture porn', as well as enough sneaking around corridors and creeping through crawlspaces to feel like lazy genre padding – even if Renee does witness, in passing, scenes that form an explanatory mosaic of what is going on.

Fear, too, is key here, as a medium and mechanism for change. Renee's spooky, over-intimate captors insist they aren't forcing her to do anything, but want her to act of her own free will, in the interests of creating a better Renee – and a better world. Yet the sedatives keeping Renee docile, and the neck brace, wristbands and leg straps attaching her to a stretcher in a locked room, tell a different story, about coercion



Mutation nation: Noomi Rapace

and oppression. The strange, tactile people running the facility claim they are benevolent (r)evolutionaries trying to save humanity both from itself and from a polluted, war-driven future, and yet they operate through terror and their own special version of Room 101 – and, like Orwell's Big Brother, they are always watching.

No stranger to women in bondage after *Secretary* (2002), director/co-writer Steven Shainberg uses sci-fi and body horror to explore the way that hubris and callousness towards others remain indelible parts of the human genome, and that fascism is rarely alien to utopia. Meanwhile Rapace riffs off her role in *Prometheus* (2012) as mother once again to something horrifyingly new, and carries this film along through sheer determination even when it seems like a great idea for a short that has been punishingly mutated into feature length. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Andrew Lazar
Steven Shainberg
Christina Weiss Lurie
Andrea Iervolino
Monika Bacardi

Screenplay

Brian Nelson

Story

Brian Nelson
Steven Shainberg

Director of Photography

Karim Hussain

Editor

Michele Conroy

Production Designer

Jeremy Reed

Music

Nathan Larson

Sound Design

Eugene Gearty

Costume Designer

Linda Muir

Visual Effects

Spin VFX
Rocket Science VFX
AIC Studios

Production Companies

AMBI Entertainment
presents a Tango

Pictures production

bald man

Cast

Noomi Rapace

Renee Morgan

Peter Stormare

Terrence

Kerry Bishé

Dianne

Michael Chiklis

Lesley Manville

Doctor Nyman

Percy Hynes White

Evan Morgan

Ari Millen

Doctor Raxlen

Jonathan Potts

Blake

In Colour

[2:35:1]

Distributor

Signature
Entertainment

Kansas City, Missouri, present day. Arachnophobic single mother Renee drops her son Evan off with her ex for the weekend. She is then abducted by people who have been observing her and Evan in their home via hidden cameras. Renee wakes in a facility, bound to a trolley, and is taken to a cell, where she is questioned by Dianne, Dr Raxlen and others about her vital statistics and her life. They indicate that she has been chosen because of a genetic predisposition. Communicating through an air vent, fellow captive Blake tells Renee that prisoners are made to face terrifying things, and that her predecessor was eventually allowed to go free.

In Renee's first trial, a poisonous spider is placed on her arm, but removed when she is deemed not to

have reacted as desired. Using a wire cutter hidden in her pocket, Renee cuts her bonds, then crawls through the air vents witnessing other prisoners' traumatising treatments. Sneaking about the facility, Renee realises that she needs a special electronic wristband to open security doors. She also sees that the staff disguise their three-pupilled eyes behind contact lenses. Renee overpowers Dianne for her wristband, but is caught by the others (who have known of her partial escape all along). When a spider mask is placed over her face, Renee mutates, and is told that she is the first fertile member of an evolved human super race. Back at home, when the people from the facility come for Evan too, she helps him escape.

Sky Ladder The Art of Cai Guo-Qiang

USA 2016, Director: Kevin Macdonald

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

If Cai Guo-Qiang's work is vast in its scale, flamboyant in its ambition and luridly expensive to execute, the creator himself comes across in this thoughtful documentary as quite the opposite: a shy, reflective and rather vulnerable type who is propelled not so much by overgrown ego or aspirations as by a specific and grandiose artistic vision.

The film draws neat lines linking Cai's childhood experience of the Cultural Revolution – in the course of which, he recalls, he spent three days burning the book collection that was to have been his irresponsible intellectual father's only legacy – with the creation of art that contains its own destruction. To this traumatic encounter with cultural erasure and social reinvention the film adds Cai's subsequent experience of a more experimental and open time studying theatre design at Shanghai Theatre Academy in the 1980s, when a resistance to the east/west binary he saw amid artists caused him to consider instead "aliens in space and how they would see the world from our universe".

This desire to separate himself from earthly politics in pursuit of grander truths recurs in his response to the criticism that greets his government-sponsored work on projects such as the opening ceremonies for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2012 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. "Everywhere in the world, artists work for their own governments," he asserts. "But this sort of thing is only an issue if you are Chinese." Says Zhang Yimou, who directed both ceremonies, "These projects have political requirements. These artists who grew up in free western countries do not understand this. We really envy them." But arguably it's Cai's willingness to depoliticise his work in order to achieve the maximum possible investment and



Stairway to paradise: Cai Guo-Qiang

scale of operation that has permitted him to become, as art critic Ben Davis puts it here, “one of those artists that function sort of like corporations – entrepreneurs”.

If Davis frames this achievement as positive – “This sort of pop-art merging of art and entertainment is the currency of the day” – Cai’s own feelings seem more ambivalent. In search of access to that “compulsive and sincere emotion” that can get lost to those at his own level, he seeks out an unknown sculptor who, in a frenzy of grief after his wife’s death, has created hundreds and hundreds of clay figures and animals; looking around the messy, poky room the man shares with his father, Cai notes, “This looks like a real artist’s room!”

Does megastardom, for all its compensations, steal that realness? “At his level,” asks artist Jennifer Wen Ma, “how do you challenge yourself?” Perhaps by making something for no corporate purpose whatsoever – or “burning money”, as Cai’s wife calls his decision to launch his 500m burning *Sky Ladder* over his sleepy hometown for his barely compos- mentis 100-year-old grandmother to watch. The motivation might be hard to discern, the money gasp-inducing and the production itself fleeting – but the artist’s sheer delight when the thing works is a spectacle in itself. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Wendi Murdoch Hugo Shong Fisher Stevens Directors of Photography Robert Yeoman Florian Zinke Editors Nick Emerson Adam Biskupski Music Alex Heffes Sound Recordist	David Hocs Production Companies An Explosion Art and Insurgent Docs production Executive Producers Bennett Miller With Cai Guo-Qiang	In Colour Part-subtitled Distributor Dogwoof
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A documentary about the Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang and his attempts to realise his dream project: a 500m ladder, reaching from the earth into the heavens and illuminated by his trademark fireworks. Over 21 years, attempts to make the work in Bath, Shanghai and Los Angeles have all failed for technical reasons. Cai decides instead to create his ladder in his hometown of Quanzhou, a fishing port in Fujian province, for the benefit of his family and particularly his ailing 100-year-old grandmother. Cai’s background as the son of an intellectual artist and bookstore owner during the Cultural Revolution is explored, as is his bohemian youth as a stage-design student in Shanghai in the post-Mao 1980s. Drawing on memories of the Cultural Revolution and on the popularity of fireworks and firecrackers in his hometown, Cai begins to experiment with gunpowder as an art material. Large-scale environmental projects in the Gobi desert and at the Great Wall of China bring him recognition within the global art market. The Guggenheim Foundation launches a retrospective of his work in 2008, and in the same year he provides a firework display for the opening of the Beijing Olympics. In 2012 he works on a piece for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit meeting, but is frustrated by political restrictions placed on what he can do. In 2015, he goes back to Quanzhou and, with barely any audience or media attention, successfully launches ‘Sky Ladder’. Cai’s grandmother dies one month later.

Storks

USA 2016
Directors: Nicholas Stoller, Doug Sweetland
Certificate U 88m 50s

Reviewed by Violet Lucca

In an era where desperate women and horned-up men populate even the tamest primetime sitcoms, there seems little point in employing euphemisms or outright lies about conception for children’s benefit. Nevertheless, Nicholas Stoller and Doug Sweetland’s *Storks* breathes life into that old fable, imbuing it with some sly commentary on corporate culture, child-rearing and our increasing reliance on delivery services over bricks-and-mortar shops.

Following a mishap involving a baby 18 years ago, the storks have abandoned infant delivery in favour of packages for online retailer cornerstore.com – a much more profitable business model. The baby grows up to be Tulip, whose maladroit efforts negatively impact Cornerstore’s bottom line, and so she is hidden away in the baby-request letters department. When a boy who feels ignored by his always-working parents writes a letter to the storks asking for a little brother, Tulip inadvertently revives the dormant practice of bairn production and distribution.

The rest of the film follows the standard formula of contemporary kids’ films (a wacky there-and-back journey), but has some funny, non-condescending jokes for all ages and good film references (including a deranged tribute to Catbus from *My Neighbour Totoro*). It’s not Pixar, but it’ll do. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Brad Lewis Nicholas Stoller Written by Nicholas Stoller Photography Director Simon Dunsdon Editor John Venzon Production Designer Paul Laspaine Music Mychael Danna Jeff Danna Supervising Sound Editor/ Sound Designer Michael Babcock Animation Supervisor Joshua Beveridge ©Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC Production Companies	A Warner Bros. Pictures presentation In association with RatPac-Dune Entertainment Executive Producers Glenn Ficarra Phil Lord Christopher Miller John Requa Jared Stern Steven Munchin Voice Cast Andy Samberg Junior Katie Crown Tulip Kelsey Grammer Hunter Jennifer Aniston Sarah Gardner Ty Burrell Henry Gardner Anton Starkman Nate Gardner Keegan-	Michael Key Alpha Wolf Jordan Peele Beta Wolf Danny Trejo Jasper Stephen Kramer Glickman pigeon toady Chris Smith Dougland Awkwafina quail Ike Barinholtz Jorma Taccone Amanda Lund miscellaneous storks Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] Some screenings presented in 3D Distributor Warner Bros. Pictures International (UK)
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Stork Mountain, present day. Instead of delivering babies, the storks now deliver parcels for online retailer cornerstore.com. Junior the stork is due to succeed Hunter as Cornerstore’s boss, and his first responsibility is to fire Tulip, a clumsy human raised by the storks following her botched delivery 18 years ago. However, rather than firing Tulip, Junior hides her away in the letters department. When Tulip puts a letter from a boy asking for a brother into the old baby-making machine, she and Junior must go on a cross-continent journey to deliver the baby to her family. Hunter is infuriated, and tries to scupper the mission. Tulip and Junior persevere, and in doing so revive the storks’ baby-delivery service. Tulip finally meets her real family.

A Street Cat Named Bob

United Kingdom/Luxembourg/USA 2016
Director: Roger Spottiswoode
Certificate 12A 102m 39s

Reviewed by Matthew Taylor

As the real-life human straight man to a comic feline sidekick, *A Street Cat Named Bob*’s James Bowen boasts a rags-to-redemption story that would be the envy of any TV talent-show contestant. At one time a homeless London busker with a drug habit, Bowen found his eventual salvation in the form of Bob, a ginger tomcat, who appeared one night in Bowen’s assisted housing and became almost surgically attached to his side thereafter. Bowen credits Bob for turning his life around – indeed, it’s hard to imagine the ensuing YouTube fame and multi-edition publishing deals without the participation of the eponymous moggie. This functional adaptation of Bowen’s first two memoirs, anonymously directed by veteran Roger Spottiswoode, is plentifully stocked with components – a handsome down-and-out, a cute animal, hippy-dippy romance, unresolved daddy issues – with which to cannily, and aggressively, warm audience hearts.

Spottiswoode has form when it comes to the human/animal buddy movie: his 1989 cop comedy *Turner & Hooch* paired Tom Hanks with an outsize Dogue de Bordeaux. Bob the cat is an equally talismanic – and occasionally exasperating – partner, ultimately proving essential to the gradual rehabilitation of his owner.

On screen virtually throughout, Luke Treadaway is an effective presence as James, suggesting a character whose guileless optimism often clashes with debilitating self-doubt. We first encounter him destitute in a rainy Covent Garden, as a search for food ends instead with an overdose of heroin. Put on a methadone programme, James is housed on a dingy estate, where he battles the temptation to visit the block’s resident dealer. Bob appears soon after – and, following a fruitless search for his owner, James is persuaded by his veterinary-nurse neighbour, kindly new-age type Betty (Ruta Gedmintas), to keep him. Bob follows his new owner everywhere – on the bus, down the street, or sitting primly like a mascot while James busks. The two eventually become a viral sensation, but there are stumbles along the way. James’s meagre funds barely allow for his own upkeep, let alone Bob’s. Then there’s an ill-advised visit to James’s estranged father (Anthony Head) on New Year’s Eve, a night that ends in ignominy after the spooked Bob wrecks the place.

As befits a source book that has been translated into 30 languages, *A Street Cat Named Bob* is evidently tailored for an international market. James’s drab housing is the exception to the mainly tourist-friendly location work featured elsewhere, and the earnest screenplay (by former *Max Headroom* and *Spitting Image* writer Tim John and US TV movie specialist Maria Nation) sometimes has an oddly transatlantic ring to it. While it’s understandable in an aspiring crowd-pleaser that James’s road to recovery is depicted in a somewhat diluted fashion, the film doesn’t entirely soft-pedal his sense of shame and isolation. Treadaway is convincing in this regard, but he’s inevitably outshone by his furry foil (played variously by seven different cats, including the real Bob).

Sully

USA 2016
Director: Clint Eastwood
Certificate 12A 95m 41s

The camera crew have fun with Bob's hurtling subjective viewpoint, while Paul Carter's sound design generously amplifies every purr and chirrup. In the publishing world, the real Bob's misadventures have now been mined for several spin-offs, something alluded to in the film when a beaming literary agent tells James, "We imagine a *series* of books." It's easy to imagine a studio executive somewhere thinking the very same. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Adam Rolston	Damian Jones	Distributor Sony Pictures Releasing UK
Screenplay Tim John Maria Nation Based on the books <i>A Street Cat Named Bob</i> and <i>The World According to Bob</i> by James Bowen	Tim Smith Paul Brett Anders Erden James Swarbrick Brian O'Shea Spencer Pollard Caroline Stern Nicolas Steil Alice de Sousa	
Director of Photography Peter Wunstorf	Cast Luke Treadaway James Bowen Ruta Gedmintas Betty Joanne Froggatt Val Anthony Head Jack Bowen Caroline Goodall Mary Bob the cat Oscar Booker Jaffa Leo Ricki Trayce Bob the cat Lorraine Ashbourne local housing officer Darren Evans Baz Beth Goddard Hilary John Henshaw tube station guard Nadine Marshall Kelly Ruth Sheen Elsie Nina Wadia bus conductress	
Film Editor Paul Tothill		
Production Designer Antonia Lowe		
Original Music David Hirschfelder		
Production Sound Mixer John Hughes		
Costume Designer Jo Thompson		
©Street Cat Film Distribution Ltd		
Production Companies Sony Pictures Releasing International, Stage 6 Films and Prescience present in association with The Exchange a Shooting Script Films production a Roger Spottiswoode film In association with Altus Media (Eleven), Kaleidoscope Film Distribution Limited, Iris Group and Iris Productions UK Ltd		
Executive Producers	Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1]	

London, 2007. Homeless busker James Bowen is hospitalised following a heroin overdose. He's subsequently put on a methadone programme and installed in supported housing. One night, James finds a ginger cat in his flat. Unable to locate its owner, he adopts it, naming it Bob. James's neighbour Betty, a veterinary nurse, treats Bob when he is injured. Bob follows James everywhere, and accompanies him – to the delight of onlookers – while he's busking. James visits his estranged father on New Year's Eve, but leaves abruptly when Bob's antics cause mayhem. Romance blossoms between James and Betty. While busking, James has an altercation with thugs, leading to his arrest and Bob's disappearance. Bob eventually returns to James's flat. Banned from busking, James turns to selling copies of 'The Big Issue' magazine. With Bob in tow, James quickly becomes a YouTube sensation. However, he's fired when co-workers complain that he's monopolising their custom. James is approached by a publisher interested in his story. With Betty's help, James succeeds in withdrawing from methadone. He reconciles with his father.

A year later, James celebrates the launch of his first book, 'A Street Cat Named Bob'.

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Clint Eastwood's film has a huge – and inevitable – built-in spoiler. Almost everybody who sees it will know what happened on 15 January 2009, when, seconds after taking off from LaGuardia, a US Airways Airbus collided with a flight of geese, disabling both engines. Famously, experienced pilot Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger realised he didn't have the height or the speed to reach LaGuardia or any other airport, and landed the plane on the Hudson. No one on board died, or was even injured.

Since pretty well everyone knows this, the actual emergency landing – which we get to see twice – powerfully recreated though it is, lacks the last degree of tension. We're in no doubt it's going to end happily. Eastwood therefore has to shift the centre of his narrative to the landing's aftermath: will Sully (Tom Hanks) and co-pilot Jeff Skiles (Aaron Eckhart) be vindicated in their decision to ditch in the water? We see them, still shaken from their experience, hauled up before an interrogatory panel of the National Transportation Safety Board, which subjects them to hostile, suspicious questioning. Had they been drinking? Were there any problems at home? Why didn't they try to return to LaGuardia? Furthermore, computer simulations of the incident seem to indicate that Sully could have got the plane to an airport.

Todd Komarnicki's screenplay is drawn from Sully's own account of events, *Highest Duty*. The NTSB denies its officials were so inquisitorial. (One's tempted to murmur, "Well, they would, wouldn't



Tom Hanks

they?") Still, it makes for some dramatic confrontations in a film that sometimes feels a touch underplotted. Eastwood bulks out the story with a few rather superfluous flashbacks – Sully learning to fly as a teenager, Sully's wartime service as a USAF fighter pilot – and tosses in the odd nightmare sequence to illustrate his worst fears, or possibly the post-traumatic after-effects. Hanks, who by now can do staunch and reliable in his sleep, turns in a solid performance, and there's an enjoyable sense of joshing camaraderie between him and Eckhart's Skiles. Poor Laura Linney, as Lorrie Sullenberger, never shares the screen with Hanks, being stuck with a thankless 'supportive wife on telephone' role.

But even the hearings, though not short on pithy dialogue, are robbed of excitement by the inevitability of the outcome. Not just because most of us know that the pilots were fully vindicated in their split-second response, but also, so great is Eastwood's regard for professionalism, because no other ending could ever be conceivable. The interest lies in seeing how it was achieved: having watched footage of the live simulations, carried out at the plane-maker's HQ in Toulouse, Sully points out that, unlike him and Skiles, the enactors knew what was coming and could prepare their decision.

Once 35 seconds of reaction time are factored in, the results become quite different.

So, no surprises. Still, the film holds the attention for its sense of understated pride in 'just doing your job' – a phrase that sums up both director and protagonist – and its flashes of quiet humour. Eckhart's Skiles gets perhaps the best line: asked at the end of the public hearing whether with hindsight there's anything he'd have done differently, he retorts, "Sure. I'd have done it in July." **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by Clint Eastwood Frank Marshall Allyn Stewart Tim Moore	Music by James J. Murakami Christian Jacob and The Tierney Sutton Band	Inc. and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC (U.S., Canada, Bahamas & Bermuda) ©Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., Village Roadshow Films (BVI) Limited and RatPac-Dune Entertainment LLC (all other territories)	In association with RatPac-Dune Entertainment A Flashlight Films production / A Kennedy/Marshall production	Laura Linney Lorrie Sullenberger Mike O'Malley Charles Porter Anna Gunn Elizabeth Davis James Sheridan Ben Edwards Ann Cusack Donna Dent Jane Gabbert Sheila Dail Molly Hagen Doreen Welsh Holt McCallany Mike Cleary Chris Bauer Larry Rooney Patch Darragh	Patrick Harten, 'Paddy'
Written by Todd Komarnicki Based on the book <i>Highest Duty</i> by Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger, Jeffrey Zaslow	Theme by Clint Eastwood	Supervising Sound Editors Alan Robert Murray Bub Asman	Executive Producers Steven Mnuchin Kipp Nelson Bruce Berman	Dolby Digital In Colour [2.35:1] [1.9:1] - IMAX prints	Distributor Warner Bros. Pictures International (UK)
Director of Photography Tom Stern	Costumes Designed by Deborah Hopper	Production Companies Warner Bros. Pictures presents in association with Village Roadshow Pictures a Malpaso production	Cast Tom Hanks Chesley Sullenberger, 'Sully' Aaron Eckhart Jeff Skiles		
Edited by Blu Murray	©Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc., Village Roadshow Films North America				
Production Designed by					

New York, 15 January 2009. Veteran pilot Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger takes off from LaGuardia airport in a US Airways Airbus A320, bound for Charlotte, North Carolina. Within seconds of takeoff, the plane runs into a flight of geese. The geese are sucked into the plane's jets, disabling both engines. Sully and co-pilot Jeff Skiles realise they don't have the height to return to LaGuardia or to make nearby Teterboro airport in New Jersey, so Sully brings the plane down on the Hudson River. The 155 passengers and aircrew, all of them uninjured, are taken off the plane by rescue boats.

Sully is publicly acclaimed as a hero, but he and Skiles are summoned before a panel of the

NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board), which suggests that he could in fact have landed at an airport and that landing on the river put his passengers' lives at risk. Computer simulations apparently bear this out; furthermore, the left-hand engine was still functioning. Sully and Skiles dispute this. At the hearing, videos of live simulations of the incident seem to support the NTSB's views, but Sully points out that the personnel carrying out the simulations knew what was coming and had rehearsed. Factoring in 35 seconds of decision time vindicates his decision. The left-hand engine is retrieved and proves to have been irrevocably damaged.

Reviewed by Fanta Sylla

As I write, the US is experiencing one of the largest slave rebellions in its history, if not the largest. Prisoners all over the country have entered the fourth week of a national strike that began on 9 September. They chose the start date symbolically: 45 years ago, on 9 September 1971, inmates of Attica prison undertook a famous uprising of their own, which was violently repressed.

You might ask: wasn't slavery in the US abolished in 1865? Surely it's not accurate to call prisoners 'slaves'? But take a closer look at the document that supposedly struck down American slavery forever, the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution. "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude," it asserts, "*except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted*, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

Ascribing slavery to the US prison system becomes an even more persuasive proposition after watching Ava DuVernay's *13th*, which deals with America's mass incarceration problem. By referring directly to slavery in her title, DuVernay situates herself in an Afro-pessimistic tradition, analysing contemporary society not as post-slavery so much as pervasively haunted and structured by slavery's spectre – what the scholar Saidiya Hartman theorised as "the afterlife of slavery". To add another reference, the documentary is the necessary visual illustration of French sociologist Loïc Wacquant's work on mass incarceration, which he called "genealogically linked to slavery".

Beyond making more accessible the ideas developed by Hartman or Wacquant, the most distinctive quality of *13th* is its hyper-contemporariness, its timeliness. By the end of the film, following an assembly of video footage of black men and boys killed by the police, you experience the strange feeling of the film having been made as you've watched it: it even documents the shooting by a police officer in July of Philando Castile, a death still fresh in our heads. A few days before the film's premiere at the New York Film Festival, various American cities again erupted in protest at the deaths of Tyree King, Keith Lamont Scott and Terence Crutcher at the hands of police. If we had to choose one word to describe the documentary, timely would be it.

But also provoking. *13th* asks many questions, the main one being: how can 'the land of the free' allow itself to be host to 25 per cent of the world's prisoners – 2.3 million people? Not only will the film change one's outlook on the US criminal justice system, it might also affect one's language. Words such as 'abolition', 'slavery', 'Republican' and 'Democrat' will have their definitions shaken, questioned and sometimes rendered meaningless during the film's 100 minutes. We learn, for instance, that one of the most influential laws in the creation of mass incarceration was enacted by then president Bill Clinton in 1994 (and supported by his wife Hillary). Both these Democrats adopted 'tough' attitudes and enforced policies inherited from Republican presidents such as Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Nixon's response to the civil rights movement (which James Baldwin called a "slave



The past in the present: Angela Davis

rebellion") and the rising crime rate in late-60s America was the law-and-order discourse that saw incarceration rates accelerate; they ramped up even more dramatically under the presidency of Reagan who, as Michelle Alexander declares in the film, literally waged a war against drug addicts and non-violent offenders. And now we've had presidential candidate Donald Trump (who makes two terrifying cameos in the film) attempting to capitalise on that political tradition with his talk of making America 'safe' again.

Slavery was driven by profit, and the enslaved population was needed for a certain economic model to thrive. The Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves, but the loophole that serves as thesis for this documentary ("except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted") permitted the creation of a new 'criminal' population from which labour could be extracted. With the help of archive footage, infographics and attestations from formerly incarcerated activists, attorneys, historians and journalists, DuVernay retraces the accumulation of a criminal population from the end of chattel slavery through Jim Crow and the civil rights movement to the present day. The documentary teems with facts and archive footage. The mass

of information can be intimidating, but the argument is well constructed, divided into three chronological chapters, with interludes using hip-hop songs. Like them, *13th* is a protest piece animated by a palpable sense of urgency. What concerns DuVernay ultimately is not politics but how politics affects the very fabric of individual lives – behind the prison-filling there are people. Mass incarceration has broken families and communities, mainly poor and of colour. It affects formerly convicted individuals who are stripped of their civil rights, forever marked by their experience in jail.

The film's inclusion of footage of black men killed by the police is also debated in the documentary. I myself am deeply sceptical of the idea that watching black people die changes anything – that one can be shocked into action. One can equally be desensitised and numbed. But the accumulation of these clips is effective, highlighting the systemic aspect of police brutality and showing it as one consequence of the criminalisation of black people in America. DuVernay gives all the evidence needed to think beyond reform and for the complete abolition of slavery in all its forms. The goal, of course, is for this documentary to be timely and relevant no more. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Howard Barish
Ava DuVernay
Spencer Averick
Screenplay
Ava DuVernay
Spencer Averick
Cinematography
Hans Charles
Kira Kelly
Editor
Spencer Averick

Music
Jason Moran
Re-recording Mixer
Jeffrey Perkins
Production Company
Kandoo Films
Executive Producers
Lisa Nishimura
Ben Cotner
Adam Del Deo

Angus Wall
Jason Sterman
In Colour

A documentary investigating the roots of America's mass incarceration, based on a loophole in the 13th Amendment of the Constitution abolishing slavery. Interviews with historians, scholars and former prisoners trace the criminalisation of black people through the creation of various laws by both Democrat and Republican parties. The role of the media is also addressed, while the police shooting of Trayvon Martin and others is linked to the boom in the prison industrial complex.

A United Kingdom

United Kingdom/USA/Czech Republic/France 2016
Director: Amma Asante
Certificate 12A 110m 44s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

"People of colour have been expunged from Britain's history," declared David Oyelowo at October's BFI Black Star season symposium, explaining why he feels that period drama that represents the black experience is key to showing Britain "how it became what it is".

Oyelowo is both the star and one of the producers of Amma Asante's handsome, warm-hearted melodrama about the lengthy diplomatic crisis caused by the 1948 marriage of Seretse Khama, London law student and king-in-waiting to Bechuanaland's largest tribe, to white British clerk Ruth Williams. It's a film that neatly pulls off that mix of entertainment and historical education that Oyelowo advocates, though the combination periodically privileges emotional satisfaction over subtlety. One of two dramas about famous interracial marriages this season (the other is Jeff Nichols's *Loving*, about the case that ended US anti-miscegenation laws), it cheerfully shoulders the narrative burden of examining the reverberations of the Khama's union in both Britain and the British protectorate of Bechuanaland.

Supremely respectful of the true-life romance at its centre, Guy Hibbert's script infuses Ruth and Seretse's jitterbugging, jazz-record-swapping courtship in foggy, ration-book London with warmth. Faithfully recording the everyday racism of street attacks ("Keep your black hands off what's ours!") and Ruth's father's disgust at her dating a black man, its depiction of post-war mores is as painstakingly period as its fusty interiors. But once the diplomatic furore ignited by Ruth and Seretse's marriage erupts, the film feels compelled to simplify its lessons, spelling out the meaning of everything from apartheid to British control of Bechuanaland.

This is history as historical romance, concentrated on the issues around the couple (racism, ruptures in both their families) as the British send Seretse into London exile despite his tribal endorsement as king. There's a passing stab at explaining impoverished post-war Britain's dependence on South Africa's gold reserves and the marriage's threat to neighbouring South Africa's newly instituted racial laws. But most of the conflict is dramatised as snooty, racist British diplomats (chiefly Jack Davenport's plotting and patronising Sir Alistair Canning) thwarting the couple's wishes over drinks in wood-panelled offices or segregated African hotels. Since black citizens were forbidden alcohol in Bechuanaland (in a graceful moment Ruth changes her gin-and-lime order deftly, to save Seretse's face), even the drinks come freighted with meaning.

Where the film scores, however, is in its ability to paint the personal as political. Hibbert and Asante, whose *Belle* (2013) also used a true story to examine sexism, racism and colonialism, work hard to give due weight to Ruth's private achievements, alongside Seretse's public addresses and BBC broadcasts. Whether she's refusing to leave for a Cape Town hospital when diphtheria complicates her pregnancy, joining a circle of black breastfeeding mothers, or helping to build mud huts in her tribal settlement, the film recognises her stoicism and community efforts as equally important. The film also



Throne together: Rosamund Pike, David Oyelowo

makes a virtue of necessity when it turns the Khama's long separation into telling depictions of outsider living in a foreign culture: Seretse snubbed in London while Ruth's dead faint in the middle of a dusty town street is ignored by passing whites. But this makes the film's second half episodic, chugging from one British government-sponsored setback to another.

Cinematographer Sam McCurdy's well-wrought visuals underline, prettily if predictably, the contrasts between grey, rainy London and the wide, red-earth vistas and ravishing sunsets of Bechuanaland (which became the Republic of Botswana in 1966). As does the film's underlying theme of the power of the word, expressed orally in Seretse's game-changing speech at his key tribal meeting, and in written form in the British government's long-suppressed Harrigan report on the Khama's marriage, which is variously lied about, leaked, and finally used as a decisive

weapon in the couple's struggle. Around all this, the direction is solid if a tad old-fashioned, as when, for heavy dramatic irony, it stages Seretse's marriage proposal on London's Embankment, across the river from the Houses of Parliament.

Oyelowo is excellent, delivering stirring rhetoric and a *Selma*-like grace under pressure, but Rosamund Pike's empathetic Ruth is the real surprise. A performance full of unexpected details (such as Ruth's avid and unfeminine staring at Seretse before they're introduced, or her gauche practising of a regal wave), it takes its character on a real journey. It also adds a nice, understated texture to the film's many tearful separations, family ruptures and joyful reconciliations, which occasionally dip into outright sentimentality, aided by Patrick Doyle's swelling score. Though it doesn't have the dash and sweep that marked out *Belle*, it's still a laudable retelling of a less than glorious chapter in British history. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Rick McCallum
David Oyelowo
Production
Peter Heslop
Brunson Green
Justin Moore-Lewy
Charlie Mason
Screenplay
Guy Hibbert
Based upon the
book *Colour Bar* by
Susan Williams
Cinematographer
Sam McCurdy
Edited by
Jon Gregory
Jonathan Amos
Production Design

Simon Bowles
Music
Patrick Doyle
Production
Sound Mixer
Igor Pokorny
Costumes
Jenny Beavan
Anushia Nieradzki

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and BFI present
with the participation
of Canal+ and Ciné+
a Yoruba Saxon/
Harbinger Pictures/
Perfect Weekend/Film
United production
An Amma Asante film
Supported by Czech
Republic through
the State Fund of
Cinematography
from the incentives
program
Developed by Pathé
and Film United
For Pathé, BBC

Films, Cambiada
Productions and BFI
Made with the
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BFI's Film Fund
Executive Producers
Cameron McCracken
Natascha Wharton
Christine Langan
Eleanor Clark Windo
Guy Hibbert
Film Extracts
Amelia (2009)

Cast
David Oyelowo
Seretse Khama

Rosamund Pike
Ruth Williams
Jack Davenport
Sir Alistair Canning
Tom Felton
Rufus Lancaster
Laura Carmichael
Muriel
Terry Pheto
Naledi
Jessica Oyelowo
Lady Lilly Canning
Arnold Ocong
Charles
Anton Lesser
Prime Minister
Clement Attlee
Jack Lowden

Tony Benn
Nicholas Rowe
Fenner Brockway
Anastasia Hille
Dot Williams
Merville Lukeba
Joe
Nicholas Lyndhurst
George Williams
Vusi Kunene
Tshekedi Khama

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Pathé Productions Ltd

London, 1947. Against her father's wishes, office clerk Ruth Williams dates Seretse Khama, heir to a tribal kingdom in the British protectorate of Bechuanaland. The British government and Seretse's uncle Tshekedi, the regent, object when the pair marry. In Bechuanaland, Seretse convinces the tribal public meeting to appoint him king. Tshekedi breaks with him. Seretse asks a journalist to investigate secret local mining tests by Anglo American. He is exiled to London by the British government. The couple campaign to be reunited. Ruth gives birth in Bechuanaland. The couple are exiled in London for a year. The journalist tips off Seretse that the tests found diamonds on his tribal

lands; the mineral rights rest with the tribes. Seretse discovers that the British government finds him fit to rule, but it concludes that approval of his marriage will alienate apartheid South Africa. Back in Bechuanaland, Seretse and Tshekedi are reconciled. Seretse and Ruth present British diplomat Sir Alistair Canning with a fait accompli: Seretse can return because he and Tshekedi have both renounced the throne. Bechuanaland will work towards democratic elections and the tribe will control the rights to the diamond fields. Seretse and Ruth have a triumphant tribal welcome home. Captions tell us that in 1966 Seretse was elected president of the new Botswana.

The Unknown Girl

Belgium/France/Italy 2016
Directors: Jean-Pierre Dardenne, Luc Dardenne

See Feature
on page 32

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

"A good doctor has to control his emotions," Dr Jenny Davin (Adèle Haenel) sternly informs her cowed intern Julien (Olivier Bonnaud), providing an ironic prologue to a sequence of events that will see her tap into her own somewhat repressed feelings in order to fully serve her responsibilities as a medic. It's the following irritable exchange with Julien – he wants to open the door to a patient, she insists it's too long after surgery hours – that kicks off the Dardenne brothers' latest moral thriller, this time framed as a modern *noir* with Jenny as self-styled gumshoe and the shiftless, shifting world of Belgium's immigrant populations as the context.

The late caller turns out to be a prostitute of African descent who dies in mysterious circumstances soon thereafter, and whose identity is unknown when the police find her body. Jenny's stunned realisation that "if I'd opened the door, she would still be alive" prompts a rethink of her own professional path – having just accepted a job in a fancy private clinic, she U-turns to take one running a public practice for uninsured punters instead – as well as a bout of amateur sleuthing. Jenny's investigative gaze falls not only on the identity of the deceased woman, but also the aspects of her own character that played into the tragedy. "I stopped you from going [to answer the door] just because you wanted to," she tells Julien. "To get the upper hand."

There's something breathtaking about this moment, both in terms of what it recognises about human interconnectedness – that an impulsive moment of mean-spiritedness can have monumental consequences – and what it reveals about the Dardenne's storytelling. Jenny's state of mind at the beginning of the film – stressed, hectoring, slightly sadistic towards her mild-mannered charge – is unexplained in terms of its specific spurs, but wholly familiar nonetheless: we've all been there. Part of the Dardenne's rarity as storytellers is their capacity to recognise not only basic moral character and social circumstances but also *mood* as pivotal in how things pan out for people. Jenny's life is derailed and another's ended in part by a bad mood, so fragile is our influence on what happens to us and what our actions set into motion. Jenny's crusade to find out more about the dead woman is an attempt to assuage her own trauma, and also a moral awakening to her capacity to effect change.

This awareness of one's impact on the world, positive or negative, deliberate or accidental, is shadowed in Jenny's ongoing interactions with her patients. Her cool, stoical behaviour is clearly the result of years of practised professional *froidueur*, but this is no clichéd case of a chilly female scientist having traded in an emotional life for a professional one. Her patients love her: they give her gifts; one composes a song in celebration of her. Her coolness is part of what is valued about her; her earnest attention to rules is how she demonstrates care.

This complexity is given full expression by Haenel's subtle performance, which delicately expresses Jenny's smallest flickers of concern, fear or pleasure, and gradually turns an initially unprepossessing character into a figure of



Who's that knocking at my door?: Adèle Haenel, Olivier Bonnaud

intense sympathy. Unusually for any protagonist, and particularly for a female one, Jenny is not categorised in terms of her personal relationships; we're told nothing of her family or any love life she might have. Her relationship with Julien clearly exceeds the merely professional, but the precise nature of the feelings between them – maternal, fraternal, platonic, would-be romantic? – is kept obscure to the viewer, as perhaps it is to them. Once more, this awareness of life's indistinctness is what elevates *The Unknown Girl* above both its genre context and its sociopolitical agenda. The dead girl is not the only unknown; Jenny is also an enigma, to herself and to us.

Inescapably, this is a film in which the death of a prostituted woman from an impoverished

black community provides emotional catharsis for an educated and financially secure white woman, through whose perspective the entire story is filtered. That the dead woman's sister eventually thanks Jenny for her investigation, reveals the woman's real name (misidentified by the police) and admits her own part in the disappearance will sit ill with some, as an improbable and overly convenient offer of absolution of white guilt. But the discomfort stirred by this scene can also be read as part of the film's moral challenge. That the police have complacently closed a file with the wrong name on it leaves us with the troubling awareness that other unknown girls and untold stories abound, without becoming anyone's private quest. 📌

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Jean-Pierre Dardenne
Luc Dardenne
Denis Freyd

Written by

Jean-Pierre Dardenne
Luc Dardenne

Director of Photography

Alain Marceon

Editor

Marie-Hélène Dozo

Art Director

Igor Gabriel

Sound Recordists

Jean-Pierre Duret
Julien Sicart

Costume Designer

Maira Ramedhan-Levi

©Les Films du
Fluve, Archipel
35, Savage Film,
France 2 Cinéma,
VOO et Be tv, RTBF
(Télévision belge)

Production Companies

Les Films du Fluve,
Archipel 35, Savage
Film present

In co-production with
France 2 Cinéma,
VOO et Be tv, RTBF
(Télévision belge)

With the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+,
France Télévisions
With the assistance
of Centre du Cinéma

et de l'Audiovisuel
de la Fédération
Wallonie-Bruxelles,
Fonds Audiovisuel
de Flandre and
Eurimages
With the support
of the Wallonie,
of Tax Shelter du
Gouvernement
Fédéral Belge, Casa
Kafka Pictures,
Casa Kafka Pictures
Movie Tax Shelter
empowered by Belfius
In association
with Wild Bunch,
Diaphana, Cinéart,
BIM Distribuzione
A co-production of

Les Films du Fluve,
Archipel 35, Savage
Film, France 2 Cinéma,
VOO et Be tv, RTBF
(Télévision belge)
Executive Producer
Delphine Tomson

Cast

Adèle Haenel
Doctor Jenny Davin
Olivier Bonnaud
Julien

Jérémy Renier

Bryan's father
Louka Minnella
Bryan
Nadège Ouedraogo
cybercafé cashier

Christille Cornil
Bryan's mother
Olivier Gourmet
Lambert son
Pierre Sumkay
Lambert father

Yves Larec
Doctor Habran
Ben Hamidou
Inspector Ben
Mahmoud
Laurent Caron
Inspector Bercaro
Fabrizio Rongione
Doctor Riga
Sabri Ben Moussa
little Ilyas
Hassiba Halabi
Ilyas's mother
Jean-Marc Balthazar

diabetic patient
Thomas Doret
Lucas
Ange-Déborah
Goulehi
Felice Koumba,
the unknown girl

In Colour [1.85:1] Subtitles

Distributor
Curzon Artificial Eye

Belgian theatrical title
La Fille inconnue

Liège, the present. When the doorbell of her surgery rings after hours, Dr Jenny Davin tells her intern Julien not to answer it. Angry with her, he leaves. When an unidentified body is subsequently found near the surgery, the police ask to see footage from the surgery's security camera. Jenny realises that the person at her door was the victim, a young African woman seeking help. Disturbed, Jenny shows the dead woman's picture to her patients in the hope of identifying her. The teenage son of a family she treats, Bryan, confides that he saw the woman performing a sex act on an old man in a camper van stationed under a bridge. Jenny tracks down the owner of the van, who becomes threatening, and his elderly father, who

admits that his son sources prostitutes for him. Jenny shows the picture to the customers and the counter assistant at an internet café, to no avail. Back home, she is threatened by a stranger who tells her to stop asking around about the dead woman. However, she continues to seek information from Bryan; the boy's parents ask her to leave him alone. Later, Bryan's father calls Jenny, in great pain, and she treats him. The police say the dead woman was named Serena Ndong. Bryan's father confesses to Jenny that the woman died after falling during an altercation while he was pursuing her for sex. The assistant from the internet café visits Jenny and tells her that the woman was her sister and that her name was Felice Koumba. They embrace.

The Wailing

Director: Na Hong-jin

Reviewed by Jasper Sharp

The investigations of a bumbling pair of small-town police detectives into the malevolent goings-on rocking a rural community, nestling among forested hillsides and near-permanently drenched in rain, initially calls to mind Bong Joon-ho's *Memories of Murder* (2003). It is unlikely, however, that this third feature from Na Hong-jin (*The Chaser*, *The Yellow Sea*) will strike quite the same chord with audiences beyond genre fans.

Its sprawling, exuberantly messy tale of demonic possession and karmic retribution kicks off in a heady fashion that sets the general tone, with a series of homicides, house-burnings and hangings accompanied by locals transformed into gurning grotesques of gnashing teeth and blackened skins, and strange sightings of a silhouetted woman materialising near the scenes of the crimes.

The finger initially points to an illicit trade in magic mushrooms, before fixing on a mysterious Japanese interloper (Jun Kunimura, a ubiquitous character actor in his homeland) who has set up home in an abandoned shack in the woods near the village. The evidence is pretty damning, since the shack's rudely furnished rooms are crammed with horned goat skulls and dead crows, its walls adorned with Polaroids of the bloodied corpses of dead villagers and their surviving relatives. Meanwhile rumours abound of a strange feral figure matching his description, clad only in a loincloth and spotted in the forest feasting on deer carcasses.

What ensues, as policeman Jong-gu's young daughter Hyo-jin breaks into boils and feverish fits and a local shaman and trainee Catholic priest are called in, hardly justifies a running time that tops two-and-a-half hours, though the film certainly brims with incident. The plot unravels at breakneck speed through a chaotic barrage of dream sequences and scenes of the hot-headed officer and his entourage frantically dashing back and forth between office, home, crime scenes



Possession: Kim Hwan-hee, Kwak Do-won

and forest hut with a furious, unruly energy that mirrors Na's own undisciplined approach to screenwriting, the shaman delivering fragments of exposition to Jong-gu via cellphone as the film hurtles towards a climax that doesn't quite deliver.

There are some fabulous moments when the gears mesh, as in the standout Manichean battle for Hyo-jin's soul at the midpoint, the exorcism performed as a carnivalesque ritual of pounding drums and leaping flames on the one side, and in an austere candlelit chamber of increasingly frenzied chanting at the receiving end of this shamanistic assault. The refusal of a Catholic church elder to get involved hints at deeper conflicts between nativist and imported spiritual ideologies that undoubtedly make more sense within a South Korean context (Catholicism has seen a massive rise in popularity over recent decades, and the film opens with a quote from the Gospel of Luke), not to mention memories of the country's colonial past under Japan. The film was a huge hit on its domestic release in May this year, but whether any clear message among the scattershot madness survives crosscultural translation is open to debate.

The Wailing, ultimately, is rather wearing. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Suh Dong-hyun
Kim Ho-sung

Written by

Na Hong-jin

Director of

Photography

Hong Kyung-pyo

Editor

Kim Sun-min

Production Designer

Lee Hwo-kyung

Music

Jang Young-gyu
Dalpalan

Production

Sound Mixer

Kim Sing-yong

Costume Designer

Chae Kyung-hwa

Action Directors

Yoo Sang-seob

Kwon Gui-duck

©Twentieth Century

Fox Film Corporation

Production

Companies

Side Mirror, Fox

International

Production (Korea)

In association with

Ivanhoe Pictures

Executive Producers

Robert Friedland

John Penotti

Cast

Kwak Do-won

Sergeant Jeon

Jong-gu

Hwang Jung-min

Il-gwang, shaman

Jun Kunimura

Japanese stranger

Chun Woo-hee

Moo-myeong, witness

Kim Hwan-hee

Hyo-jin, Jeon's

daughter

Jang So-yeon

wife

Heo Jin

mother-in-law

Kim Do-yeon

Yang Yi-sam

Son Kang-kuk

Oh Sung-bok

Dolby 5.1

In Colour

[2:35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

104 Films

South Korean

theatrical title

Goksung

South Korea, the present. A series of strange and violent deaths grips a small rural community. While discussing one of these murders, officer Jong-gu and colleague Sung-bok see a contorted female figure in their police-station window, silhouetted by a lightning flash. Sung-bok hears rumours that a mysterious Japanese man, recently moved into the nearby forest, is behind the crimes. Jong-gu's daughter Hyo-jin begins having feverish nightmares. The two policemen visit the Japanese man's hut with Sung-bok's nephew Yi-sam, a trainee priest who speaks some Japanese. They discover photographs of the victims and Hyo-jin's shoe; Jong-gu violently threatens the Japanese suspect. Jong-gu's mother-in-law hires a shamanic exorcist, Il-gwang, who battles over Hyo-jin's soul

with the Japanese man. Alarmed by their daughter's screams, Jong-gu and his wife disrupt the ritual. In the hospital, Hyo-jin's condition worsens. When Jong-gu leads a lynch mob to the Japanese man's hut, they are attacked by the zombified corpses of the village victims. The Japanese man flees and is run over by a lorry. Hyo-jin recovers, but Il-gwang is beset by nosebleeds and vomiting fits, induced by the image of a ghostly woman. Yi-sam returns to the hut to confront the Japanese man, who is still alive and who sprouts horns and claws. Jong-gu meets the ghostly woman, who tells him that he is being punished because he accused another without evidence. He returns home to find his wife and mother-in-law murdered by Hyo-jin.

We Are the Flesh

Mexico 2015

Director: Emiliano Rocha Minter

Certificate 18 80m 2s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"Solitude," declares Mariano (Noé Hernández), "drags you, forces you to come face to face with your darkest fantasies – and when nothing happens, you stop being afraid of your most grotesque thoughts." Normally this bearded 47-year-old hermit enjoys complete solitude. He lives alone in a dilapidated building, his only connection with the outside world of Mexico the umbilical dumb waiter through which he obtains food, traded for the alcohol that he himself distils. In the dark, with the help of hallucinogens administered from a dropper, he conjures the presence of his late mother.

Yet when teenage siblings Fauna (María Evoli) and Lucio (Diego Gamaliel) break into Mariano's domain, they find themselves recruited to, and corrupted by, the older man's peculiar drives. First, for bed and board, they help him reconstruct the building's interiors into a womb-like set, and then, under the influence of his seductive authority and drugs, they act out various transgressions – sexual, spiritual, moral – that reveal Mexico's hidden psyche.

Emiliano Rocha Minter's feature debut *We Are the Flesh* is a film of inversions. Suffocating internal spaces are used to stage (in negative) the tensions of the nation beyond these closed doors – a "rotten society" (as Mariano sees it) whose repressive ideological matrices (religious, military, patriarchal) are here perverted and travestied, profaned and feminised. The film plays as a parade of outrageous acts – incest, necrophilia, murder, rape, orgies, cannibalism – but the impact of their shock is mitigated and distanced by lysergic stylisations (colour-coded lighting and filters, '3D' effects, spinning camerawork) and repeated ruptures to the narrative logic, all in a uterine space where the irrational triumphs and even death knows no bounds.

At the centre of this confusing cavalcade of licentious performances and miraculous resurrections, Mariano himself cuts a mercurial figure – all at once satanic tempter, Hitlerian tyrant, Manson-esque cultist, rakish libertine, slick showman and reborn Christ. Meanwhile prudish, virginal Lucio turns out to be a fallen angel (expressly dubbed 'Lucifer' at one point), and is initiated by the paterfamilias into infernal rites of passage: his adolescent



Age of unreason: María Evoli

metamorphosis into a Mariano-in-the-making, and his eventual, blinking re-emergence into the sunlit world beyond, seen by him, as well as by us, as if for the first time.

Though hermetic, *We Are the Flesh* has not been made in a vacuum. When Fauna, on her knees and graphically felling her brother, imagines that he is the middle-aged Mariano instead, we witness a reprise of the image that scandalously opened and closed Carlos Reygadas's *Battle in Heaven* (2005). Likewise, the group's anthropophagous rituals evoke the clan of marginalised cannibals in Jorge Michel Grau's *We Are What We Are* (2010), while the transference of perversions from one generation to the next recalls the carnivalesque inheritance of the protagonist in Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Santa Sangre* (1989). Like those three films, *We Are the Flesh* is exploring contradictions in Mexico's body politic – while leaving us all alone in the dark with our thoughts about what monsters it has engendered. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Julio Chavezmontes
Moisés Cosío
Emiliano Rocha
Minter

Written by

Emiliano Rocha
Minter

Director of

Photography

Yollóti Gómez

Editing

Yibran Assaud

Emiliano Rocha

Art Director

Manuela García

Original Music

Esteban Aldrete

Sound Design

Javier Umpierrez

Costume Designer

Anamaya

Farthing-Kohl

©Piano, Emiliano

Rocha Minter, Fondo

para la Producción

Cinematográfica

de Calidad and

Detalle Films

Production

Companies

A Piano production

in co-production

with Detalle Films,

Instituto Mexicano

de Cinematografía,

Fondo para la

Producción

Cinematográfica de

Calidad (México)

in association with

Simplamente,

Splendor Omnia

Cast

Noé Hernández

Mariano

Maria Evoli

Fauna

Diego Gamaliel

Lucio

Jonathan Miralda

Andres Villalobos

the cave

Gabino Rodríguez

México

Maria Cid

Gudalupe

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Arrow Films

Mexican

theatrical title

Tenemos la carne

Bearded, scruffy Mariano lives alone in a dilapidated building, distilling alcohol that he trades for food via a dumb waiter and hallucinating on narcotics from a dropper. When homeless teenage siblings Fauna and Lucio break in, Mariano offers them food and lodging in exchange for their labour. The three reconstruct the building's interior to resemble the womb to which Mariano longs to return. As they do so, Mariano wins over Fauna, though his lewdness repels Lucio. When Lucio steals Mariano's dropper, Mariano poisons Fauna and provides the antidote only after vegetarian Lucio has eaten a steak and returned the dropper.

Later, Mariano persuades Fauna and the reluctant, virginal Lucio to have sex. Mariano ejaculates over the siblings and collapses dead. Confused, guilty and frustrated, Lucio resorts to masturbation, while Fauna rubs herself against Mariano's corpse. Mariano is reborn as a slick, beardless showman. With Fauna's help, he abducts a soldier whose throat he cuts over a bucket. He then distils alcohol from the soldier's blood. By now, Lucio is being fed hallucinogens and blood. Fauna brings a young woman in, gives her drugs and rapes her. Lucio joins in. A group of people hold an orgy inside the 'womb' to celebrate Mariano's birthday, and at Mariano's request, they feast on his blood and flesh. Lucio, now bearded and wearing a dress, staggers out of the building on to the streets of modern Mexico.

Your Name

Director: Shinkai Makoto
Certificate 12A 106m 26s

See Feature
on page 40

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Shinkai Makoto's dreamily emotional anime romance, the highest grossing film

in Japan this year at ¥15bn and counting, has unsurprisingly set off a wave of speculation about whether Shinkai is 'the new Miyazaki'. Both directors do indeed combine ravishing visuals with engrossing storytelling, and their work notably celebrates Japanese landscape and culture. But it's a comparison that's particularly unfair to Shinkai. His interest in finding visual romance in sci-fi or today's Japan, and in the emotional bonds and ordeals of young people, means that he is largely (aside from the Miyazaki-inflected 2011 fantasy *Children Who Chase Lost Voices/Journey to Agatha*) ploughing a different furrow from Miyazaki's heroic, fantastical adventures.

Your Name, a body-swap story in which Tokyo boy Taki and country girl Mitsuha find themselves switching lives when they fall asleep, is very much a teen romance. Though he admits the influence of Japanese body-swap classics such as the 12th-century tale 'Torikaebaya Monogatari' and the 1982 high-school comedy *Tenkosei*, Shinkai's story uses the switching sensitively to examine teenage identity and isolation. Full of the gulps and emotional highs of teen interaction, the voice work by Kamiki Ryunosuke and Kamishiraishi Mone gives Taki and Mitsuha respectively the depth to mine these issues, even for those of us reliant on the subtitling.

Rather than *Freaky Friday* hilarity, the switching dramas are all on teen topics, charmingly executed: clumsy dating, high-school embarrassments, even a very Japanese gaffe about using wrongly gendered language. But as the film progresses, it starts to mix its genre ingredients intriguingly, adding a time-travelling supernatural element and the tense challenge of a natural disaster. The meteor strike that threatens Mitsuha's sleepy lakeside town Itomori in the film's second half is obviously a metaphor for the 2011 Tohoku



Making the switch: *Your Name*

earthquake and tsunami. It's incorporated skilfully into the supernatural side of the narrative, which itself grows from the film's strong themes of Shinto spirituality (Mitsuha is a 'miko', a Shinto priestess). However, the film does experience a kind of plot indigestion late on, as the romantic strand which seeks to reunite Taki and Mitsuha threatens to derail the urgent quest to save Itomori. Overuse of teen-fave Radwimps' power ballad 'Sparkle' similarly endangers the story's emotional peaks.

That said, it's interesting to see how *Your Name*'s ambitious narrative and visuals advance the theme of yearning couples separated by time or distance, explored in Shinkai's recent films *5 Centimetres Per Second* (2007) and the swooningly lovely *The Garden of Words* (2013). He has retained the vibrant colour palette and fluid movement of the latter, creating ravishing landscapes of verdant countryside or Tokyo's shimmering skyscrapers. Their juxtaposition with careful, photorealistic close-ups of a door swishing open or a phone screen scrolling give the characters a rich, grounded presence. As the film swings back and forth between mountain shrines and Shinjuku Station, it eloquently and elegantly expresses not only teen confusion but also the tensions between old and new Japan. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Furasawa Yoshihiro

Written by

Shinkai Makoto

Photography

Ando Masashi

Editor

Shinkai Makoto

Music

Radwimps

Sound Design

Morikawa Eiko

Animation Director

Ando Masashi

Character Design

Tanaka Masayoshi

Production

Companies

A Toho Co. production

CoMix Wave Films Inc.

Executive Producers

Ichikawa Minami

Kawaguchi

Noritaka

Voice Cast

Kamishiraishi Mone

Miyamizu Mitsuha

Kamiki Ryunosuke

Tachibana Taki

Yuki Aoi

Natori Sayaka

Ichihara Etsuko

Miyamizu Hitoha

Tani Kanon

Miyamizu Yotsuba

Nagasawa Masami

Okudera Miki

Shimazaki

Nobunaga

Fujii Tsukasa

Narita Ryo

Teshigawara

Katsuhiko, 'Tessie'

Ishikawa Kaito

Takagi Shinta

In Colour

Subtitles

Distributor

National Amusements

Japanese

theatrical title

Kimi no Na wa

finds Mitsuha's sake at the shrine and drinks some. He is body-swapped back to be Mitsuha on the day of the meteor fall. Taki/Mitsuha persuades her friends to evacuate Itomori that evening. Taki wakes at the shrine as himself, and meets Mitsuha briefly at twilight, telling her to evacuate Itomori. She and her friends cut the town's power, and broadcast an evacuation warning as the meteor comes close. Her father, the town mayor, tries to stop them. The meteor lands.

Five years later, Taki reads a news article, commemorating the saving of Itomori. He and Mitsuha dimly recognise one another one day on passing metro trains, and run to find each other. Despite not knowing why, they are very moved, and introduce themselves.



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Home cinema



In the drink: Bonar Colleano and Earl Cameron in Basil Dearden's *Pool of London*

DUKE OF EARL

BLACK STAR

Ninety-nine year-old Earl Cameron, British cinema's first black screen star, recalls his debut in Basil Dearden's *Pool of London*

By Philip Kemp

1951 was something of a vintage year for Ealing Studios: two of its best remembered comedies, Alexander Mackendrick's *The Man in the White Suit* and Charles Crichton's *The Lavender Hill Mob*, and the first of Harry Watt's African excursions, *Where No Vultures Fly*, were released that year. Which may be why the fourth Ealing movie of 1951, Basil Dearden's *Pool of London*, has been largely neglected. If it's

mentioned at all, it's often as the seed from which *Lavender Hill Mob* unexpectedly germinated.

T.E.B. 'Tibby' Clarke, the studio's star screenwriter, had been assigned a serious slice-of-life drama with *noir* undertones, centred on the London docks; John Eldridge's outline included a Bank of England employee who uses his position to steal bullion. Working on it, Clarke began to see comic possibilities; and when studio boss Michael Balcon asked how *Pool of London* was getting on, Clarke admitted that the river had been dropped in favour of the heist comedy. According to George Perry's 1981 account of the studio *Forever Ealing* "the chief erupted in rage". Clarke retreated, leaving the outline on Balcon's desk – but then two hours later was summoned back to be calmly told to go ahead with his idea, with Crichton (who had directed Clarke's *Hue and Cry*) as director. *Pool* was reassigned to screenwriter Jack

Whittingham, with Dearden slotted in to direct.

Pool deserves better than this marginal role, though. In his classic study of the studio's output *Ealing Studios* (1980), Charles Barr notes, "If only one film could be preserved for posterity, to illustrate the essence of Ealing from the time before decadence set in, this would be a good choice, with its clear-cut embodiment of Ealing attitudes to women, violence, social responsibility and cinematic form." Oddly enough, Barr doesn't mention the one element that makes *Pool* of exceptional interest to posterity: this was the first British film to feature a love interest between a black man and a white woman.

Following a favourite Ealing pattern, the film depicts a group: members of the crew of a merchant freighter that docks in London over a weekend. (The 'Pool of London' is the stretch of the Thames from London Bridge

down to Limehouse where, prior to the advent of container ships, most merchant shipping would dock.) Some, like the chief officer (James Robertson Justice, ripe as ever), refuse to set foot on shore – he prefers to stay in his cabin reading poetry and knocking back brandy. Others, like Dan MacDonald (the film's lead, American-born actor Bonar Colleano), eagerly head ashore. Already given to a little minor smuggling, Danny this time gets involved in something much more dangerous.

His best friend on board is a Jamaican sailor, Johnny Lambert. Accompanying Danny to a Lambeth music-hall where his friend's linking up with a criminal contact, Johnny meets Pat, an English girl who works in the box office. They meet up several more times over the course of the weekend. This being 1951 England there's not the least hint of sex involved, but the attraction between them is palpable.

Johnny's played by the Bermudan-born actor Earl Cameron and this, remarkably enough, is his screen debut. 'Remarkably' since, after eight years of stage-only experience, he gives a wholly relaxed, natural performance; you'd think he'd been acting for the camera for years. But Cameron – who's now 99 – recalls that it didn't come so naturally to him at first.

"No, it wasn't easy. I was very lucky, because I'd been eight years in the theatre, and I was invited to test for the film. It was the scene [with Susan Shaw in the film] where they're walking across London Bridge. It was a very quiet scene, because it's at midnight, and my character was a bit grieved because I'd had some insults thrown at me. So I was giving a typical stage performance, you know, and they said, 'Bring it down.' I tried several times, but for some reason I couldn't get it. So I left the studio feeling very depressed, thinking 'I could have done this.' Fortunately they phoned up again two or three days later, saying would I come back and test with another girl? But the second time I still didn't get it right. I was disgusted with myself. But Basil Dearden must have been certain I could do it, because he invited me back again, and he said, 'Ok, nice and quiet – now action.' So I said my line, 'The first time I met Danny,' and he said 'Earl, that's it – you've got it!' And it's always come easy to me after that – I never had any problems."

The anti-racism in *Pool of London* is understated but unmistakable. The only racist comments come from unsympathetic characters – the doorman at the music-hall, Maisie (Moirá Lister), a brash young woman Dan's involved with. Otherwise, people are friendly enough towards Johnny. Was this too rosy a picture of English society at the time? Cameron thinks not: "It was very true to life as I knew it in England. I didn't find much problem with racism as such – but every so often some guy would come out with a nasty remark." He agrees, though, that Ealing would have wanted any overall social criticism downplayed: "Michael Balcon didn't want to touch on any kind of racial problem. They had to treat it very delicately."

The relationship between Johnny and Pat is handled with equal caution. The two never kiss



Race relations: Susan Shaw with Cameron

and barely even touch. At most, Pat once rests her hand on Johnny's shoulder as she's getting into a boat. (Even so, the film hit censorship problems in the States.) At no point, as Cameron recalls it, was it ever suggested that they might be shown to go further. "It shouldn't matter, but it does," Johnny tells Pat wistfully. "Maybe some day it won't." Nonetheless, Cameron enjoyed his scenes with Susan Shaw. "She was a delight to work with – a very lovely girl." In fact, it was between Shaw and her co-star, Colleano, that romance blossomed: the pair fell in love on the set, and were married in 1954. For a while they were a golden couple, but then tragedy hit: Colleano was killed in a car crash in 1958 and Shaw, devastated, took to drink. Her career fell apart; she made her last film in 1963 and died in poverty of cirrhosis, 15 years later, aged just 49. Knowledge of this casts a shadow over the sweetness of her scenes with Cameron.

Cameron, however, went on to a long and fruitful career – though, as he notes, despite

It's such a lovely part and a very good film. Very well directed. So that gives me the greatest pleasure to watch now



Cameron at the BFI Southbank in October 2016

excellent notices for his performances in *Pool*, it took a while for further offers to come in. "For a white actor, that might have happened sooner." Even so, he's appeared in some 90 films and TV dramas in a wide variety of roles; though often cast as a sensitive outsider, he's enjoyed playing less lovable types. He was a treacherous Mau Mau terrorist in Terence Young's overheated melodrama *Safari* (1955), co-starring with Victor Mature as a white hunter: "I didn't take it too seriously. But I enjoyed the actual character, yes."

Cameron played an even less admirable character in Sydney Pollack's political thriller *The Interpreter* (2005); the *Baltimore Sun* found him "magnificent as the slimy old fraud of a dictator". "I wasn't very well when I was on that film," he recalls. "I think I had pneumonia. But I was only supposed to be on it for three weeks, and it turned out to be three months – the main reason for that was that Sydney Pollack, instead of building a replica of the United Nations building in the studio, wanted to shoot in the UN itself. We were allowed to shoot in the main hall, but only at weekends. So my part, instead of taking three weeks, lasted over three months. And I got paid a lot more!"

This came in the wake of a long hiatus in Cameron's acting career. "I was away from acting for 15 years. I was in the Solomon Islands from 1978, and only came back in 1994. I became a member of the Baha'i faith in 1963 – and I know many people wouldn't understand this, and I wouldn't blame them for it – but being a Baha'i to me was much more important than being an actor. It's a very widespread faith, and the Solomon Islands really needed Baha'is." He only left when his first wife, Audrey, died of breast cancer. "When I came back I did mostly small parts for television, and then came *The Interpreter*. My [second] wife and I were down in the Scilly Isles when my agent phoned up and said I had an inquiry from Sydney Pollack. And I couldn't quite place who he was!"

Hollywood has never attracted him. "It's a very decadent place," he's been quoted as saying. "There's drugs and sex and alcohol; I didn't need that kind of life." Instead, he built his career as one of the most consistently cast black actors in Britain; but of all his screen roles, the one he's still proudest of is *Pool of London*. "It's such a lovely part and a very good film, very well directed. So that gives me the greatest pleasure to watch now." Recognition has gradually come his way: he was awarded the CBE in 2009, in 2012 a theatre was named in his honour in his native Bermuda, and in 2013 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Warwick. And just last month he gave an onstage interview at London's BFI Southbank before receiving the Screen Nation Hall of Fame award.

Cameron also holds the distinction of being, the oldest surviving *Doctor Who* actor – he appeared alongside the Cybermen in 'The Tenth Planet' in 1966. If the series offered him a cameo now, would he take it? He laughs. "I'd love to – so long as there weren't too many heavy lines!"

i *Pool of London* is out now on UK Blu-ray and DVD from StudioCanal

New releases

ALMAYER'S FOLLY

Chantal Akerman; Belgium/France 2011; Icarus Films/Region A Blu-ray; 127 minutes; 1.77:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Chantal Akerman's final narrative film, this hypnotic adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novel encountered unusual difficulties finding theatrical release – particularly surprising considering Akerman's profile and the film's payload of South-East Asia exotica, its superbly crafted old-school melodrama complete with a ravishing half-blood temptress (Belgian-Greek-Rwandan beauty Aurora Marion) and its hefty dose of colonialist comeuppance.

Characteristically, every shot has an idea for its battery, including a two-minute *tour de force* pan through the night jungle listening to two lovers plot their escape, and eventually happening upon them as if they were camouflaged animals.

Conrad's 1895 story is set in Borneo in the late 19th century, but Akerman knocked it up to 1950s Cambodia, where the weary, bitter titular Frenchman (Stanislas Merhar) nevertheless refers to his recalcitrant native wife as "the Malaysian". (The half of the movie that's not in French is in Khmer.) Almayer has been set up, so far disastrously, to find gold by Captain Lingard (Marc Barbé), whose adopted daughter Almayer has married, and who soon arrives to take his young granddaughter Nina away for a convent education.

But wait: we've seen Nina (Marion) grown up, in the film's entrancing opening, as a Khmer dandy lip-synchs to Dean Martin's 'Sway' in an outdoor café in Phnom Penh, backed by a gaggle of lazy dancers. He gets knifed mid-song, and everyone scatters except a dreamily dancing Nina, who is told by an offscreen whisper (Akerman's?) that her boyfriend is dead, and who then saunters up to the camera for a mega close-up and sings Mozart's Ave Verum Corpus in Latin, top to bottom.

The crisis of the young Nina's apprehension (her mother spirits her into a swamp to hide her) and her offscreen containment in the gated school only pressurises Almayer's doom; when she returns, fierce and hateful and full-bodied, the sorrowful fallout from self-pitying white imperialism takes tragic shape.

The evoked sense of place and time is massive, and Akerman never hurries when she can dawdle and examine. This was new territory for the late Belgian – amid the colonial ghosts, in the bush of Conradian, within the echo chamber of history – but few other filmmakers have made such a lustrous and ironic weave out of the iconography of maddened white men lost in Third World metaphors.

Disc: Icarus provides a nice transfer of a sumptuously shot film, but there are no supplements.

ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13

John Carpenter; US 1976; Second Sight/Region B Blu-ray 40th Anniversary Limited Edition/Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 91 minutes; 2.35:1; Features: commentaries (John Carpenter, Tommy Lee Wallace), interviews (Austin Stoker, Nancy Loomis, Joseph Kaufman, Blu-ray exclusives include

early Carpenter USC short, Charlotte Szlovak's 2003 'Do You Remember Laurie Zimmer?'; bonus soundtrack CD

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

For fans of John Carpenter's first proper feature, there's a thrill even in popping in the disc and hearing his unforgettable synth theme playing over the menu. This '40th Anniversary Edition' will come as a welcome arrival for long-time fans and newcomers alike, though the effect will undoubtedly be different for those weaned on more hyped-up recent action fare or perhaps not so devoted to the oeuvre of Howard Hawks as the young Carpenter evidently was.

With a thriller plot revolving around a motley bunch of cops and criminals who must band together when a rundown LA police station is surrounded by massed armed youth, *Assault on Precinct 13* is essentially an update on the prison siege in *Rio Bravo* (1959), though this time the unfolding group dynamic is heightened by modern extremities of gunplay and the serene certainty of Carpenter's controlled Panavision framing.

A repeated theme in Carpenter's astute commentary is that he now finds the film's build-up too slow, but for many the stately first half is crucial in creating palpable foreboding before the modestly budgeted mayhem eventually explodes. Somehow the cast deliver Carpenter's old-school dialogue like the movie stars they never quite were, and it all still runs like clockwork: a film at once in thrall to vintage Hollywood but also representing the post-Romero generation of independents whose impudence was to alter the US celluloid landscape for ever.

Disc: A problem-free transfer of mint materials, with the uncompressed mono option on the Blu-ray giving Carpenter's score and the fizzing silencer rounds plenty of impact. The DVD is packed to the rafters with interviews and commentaries (Carpenter definitive, art director Tommy Lee Wallace amiable enough on the making-of minutiae), but the prize fare is on the Blu-ray, notably a fascinating Carpenter student short whose masked voyeur and gliding camera look forward to *Halloween* (1978), and also a genuine curio in sometime Chantal Akerman associate Charlotte Szlovak's featurette *Do You Remember Laurie Zimmer?* (2003). Having shot an abortive feature in LA in 1977 with Carpenter's leading lady, here Szlovak returns



Twist of fate: *The Captive*

to the city decades later to rekindle memories and discover that Zimmer (also recalled in France for her appearance in Jean Eustache's *Une sale histoire*) has disappeared entirely. The old footage they'd shot together thus becomes a ghostly echo in a city of broken dreams.

THE CAPTIVE

Cecil B. DeMille; US 1915; Olive Films; 51 minutes; Region A/1 Blu-ray/DVD; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: None.

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

A foundational slab of Hollywood industry bedrock, Cecil B. DeMille made some 75 features, but few of us could name more than a handful – or consider that many are worth watching. All that's largely because, despite his household-name status into the 1950s, it's his silent films, going back to the Wilson administration, that are his real claim to fame. Most are either lost or unavailable, of course, but 1915's *The Captive*, rediscovered and restored, makes the case nicely – released the month after D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*, the then-topical drama is fluent enough with close-mid-shots, shifting point-of-views, parallel narrative threads, depth composition and acting subtleties to make Griffith's supposed revolution look overhyped. (In this it is, like many of the recently-unearthed movies made before or contemporaneously with Griffith's blockbuster, rewriting history.) Set in Montenegro during the 1913 Balkan Wars, though quite obviously shot in the Hollywood hills, the scenario has Blanche Sweet as a farm girl who, after her brother is killed in combat, is sent a Turkish POW as slave labour to work her land for her. The Turk, an aristocrat amusedly ignorant of agrarian toil, is played by House Peters, one of the era's few superstars not cultivated by Griffith's factory. Playing a blithe and sneaky charmer in a fez, Peters is actually pretty hilarious. Sweet's maiden falls for the prisoner, and their mismatched fates are subsequently mangled by first a conquering troop of drunken Ottomans (whom he has to battle to prevent a wholesale gang rape), and then a retaking by Montenegrin forces. Throughout, Sweet is bewitching and savvy (not the fluttering bird-girl Griffith liked her to be), and the action is brisk – even though, notoriously, DeMille's realistic zeal with the armed-invasion scenes ended up getting an extra accidentally shot dead. **Disc:** Sadly, no extras, but the restored image is often astonishingly crisp and clean for a movie that is literally more than a century old.

ELECTRA, MY LOVE

Miklós Jancsó; Hungary 1974; Second Run/Region-free Blu-ray and DVD (separate releases); 74/71 minutes; Certificate 15; 1.66:1; Features: interview (János Kende), booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

The decade since Miklós Jancsó first unveiled his mature style with *The Round-Up* (1965) saw constant refinement, conventional narrative giving way to near-abstract ballets whose fiendishly complicated choreography was danced by performers and camera alike. With just 12 shots (eight extended, four fill-in) and a cast of hundreds (people and horses), Jancsó's take on a foundational Greek myth is so formally dazzling that a first-time viewer may well spend more time



WEST END BOYS

Anthony Newley gives a persuasive performance as a petty crook in 60s gangland – but the streets of Soho are this film's true stars

THE SMALL WORLD OF SAMMY LEE

Ken Hughes; UK 1963; StudioCanal/EST/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 107/103 minutes; 1.75:1; Features: interview with Julia Foster, interview with Mike Hodges, location featurette with Richard Dacre

Reviewed by Andrew Male

I first discovered Ken Hughes's *The Small World of Sammy Lee* on YouTube, about six years ago, in the form of Wolfgang Suschitzky's strange and beautiful title sequence; three-and-a-half minutes of low-angled car-mounted camera, slowly prowling the morning streets of early-60s Soho, cut to Kenny's Graham's mournful jazz score for flute, double bass, guitar and vibes.

It's a comforting clip to get hung up on, especially in light of what's happening in London's Soho right now, where no street, shop or landmark is safe from rent hikes, gentrification or redevelopment: the film's seemingly benign, almost peaceful footage captures a threatened square mile in wistful slumber, scored in melancholy tones, at the sweet spot between 50s bohemia and 60s sleaze – fixed, safe, knowable.

Remodelled from a 1958 BBC TV play that Hughes wrote for Anthony Newley, *The Small World of Sammy Lee* was largely dismissed on release. Andrew Sarris in the *Village Voice* called it “self-righteous to the point of hypocrisy”, while the *Observer*'s Philip French noted the “tired vignettes of sub-Runyon characters”. Yet while Hughes's film certainly has its flaws, they're flaws that now fascinate, in a way they perhaps didn't in 1963.

One of the final productions for Michael Balcon's Bryanston Films, Hughes's picture tracks the desperate, decreasing circles of Soho strip-club compère and smalltime hustler Sammy Lee, a working-class Jewish antihero – a shifting, nuanced performance by Newley – who's been given just five hours to find and repay £300 in gambling debts to his bookie's two gangland heavies.

Bryanston had made its name distributing such British New Wave successes as *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *A Taste of Honey*, but by 1963 it was pinning its hopes on tough-edged crime dramas like *Strongroom*, *Panic* and *A Prize of Arms*.

Hughes's film is caught in the middle. Sammy's self-loathing, his hack stage act and his final haranguing of his strip-club audience (“These birds back here, they hate you – you make them sick”) suggest a young Archie Rice, while Julia Foster's turn as vulnerable Bradford girl Patsy, hoping to make it in the striptease industry, drips with melancholy kitchen-sink sentiment, her final bus back home a tragic mirror image of Liz's journey to London at the end of *Billy Liar*, released the same year.



Run for your life: Anthony Newley in *The Small World of Sammy Lee*

Yet the film also points ahead. Of the two mob enforcers who come to collect, one, Johnny, is played by a 22-year-old Clive Colin Bowler; with his three-buttoned tonic suit, razor-scarred cheek and psychotic smirk, he lurks like some chilling herald of James Fox's Chas Devlin in *Performance* (1970). The suited-and-booted Krays were already operating in Soho by then, and it's a nice detail that Suschitzky's beautiful location work maps out a West-to-East End route similar to the Krays' rat-run from the Hideaway Club on Gerrard Street to the Grave Maurice pub in Whitechapel (briefly glimpsed through a cab window in the film).

Contemporary reviews found little of interest in the location work, regarding Sammy's desperate runs through Soho streets in the final third as little more than padding. It now feels like the true heart of the movie. Existing outside the film's formulaic narrative tropes, and away from the Shepperton sets, the location shots of Soho and Whitechapel connect Sammy's character with a very real London, and link the twin aspects of his divided self. His Jewish family roots as Sammy Leeman are in Whitechapel, which he

Sammy is caught between the ruins of the post-war past and the empty promise of a dazzling future

visits to borrow money from his brother Lou (Warren Mitchell), who runs a deli near Cobb Street. The Soho locations, meanwhile, become the darker setting for Sammy's unmasking and fall, as his various personas are stripped away until he stops ‘performing’ altogether.

In the film's penultimate scene, set at Victoria coach station, Sammy's escape route is blocked by Johnny and his fellow heavy. In a remarkable sequence, eerily similar to the final scene in John Mackenzie's *The Long Good Friday* (1980), Hughes cuts from Foster, shouting for Sammy, her face pressed against the window of her Bradford-bound bus, to a close-up on Newley – scared, vulnerable, naked, human – as he runs through the limited options available to him. The film ends with him weeping, beaten and bleeding on a wartime bombsite, lit by a blank white advertising hoarding, caught between the ruins of the post-war past and the empty promise of a dazzling future.

Viewed in this context, Suschitzky's title sequence doesn't seem safe or peaceful at all. The streets appear narrow, labyrinthine. They repeat. They double back. *The Small World of Sammy Lee* is too small – a maze, a trap, a dead end – and the current acts of gentrification and desecration taking place in Soho and Whitechapel are merely the culmination of a very particular kind of wheeling and dealing that started with the Krays and their ilk, fiftysomething years ago. 

New releases

marvelling at production logistics than taking in its message (witnessing the shoot, Gideon Bachmann described it as “a military operation of exacting accuracy”) – but it comfortably repays repeated viewings.

It was based on a play by László Gyurkó, and Jancsó makes no attempt to hide the piece's theatricality: characters declaim rather than converse; dance and gesture are often the primary means of expression; and lead actress Mari Töröcsik seems cast at least in part for her symbolic status as a Hungarian National Theatre *grande dame*. (It's a very different performance from the more intimate one she gave in Jancsó's *Silence and Cry* a few years earlier.) It's the logical successor to *Red Psalm* (1972), but while that film explicitly focused on 19th-century land disputes, *Electra* is, for the most part, far more universal.

But it's hard to miss the 20th-century parallels. When the tyrant Aegisthus (József Madaras) calls for people to offer him constructive criticism without fear of reprisal, he's anticipating Mao Zedong in the late 1950s – and so are his cowed subjects, who understandably opt for sycophancy. And if the film's spoken language and frequent recourse to Hungarian folk culture (songs and dances alike) didn't make its ultimate allegorical purpose clear, the final appearance of a red helicopter landing to the pounding chords of Béla Bartók's quintessentially Hungarian ‘Allegro barbaro’ spells it out, with *Electra* leading a revolt by people who consider that their former oppression justifies violent reprisal.

Disc: This was sourced from the recent Hungarian National Film Archive restoration, which would be good news but for the fact that overzealous digital cleaning has affected some of the finer detail – an issue that also bedevils the current Hungarian DVD. However, it's still a colossal improvement over the Facets DVD release (US, 2003), which wasn't even framed correctly. A long and fascinating interview with cinematographer János Kende completes the on-disc contents, and Peter Hames's booklet essay offers plenty of production as well as critical detail.

FEDORA

Billy Wilder; US 1978; Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray/Region 2 DVD; 116 minutes; 1.85:1. Features: deleted scenes, booklet, restoration comparison

Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

Nearly three decades after *Sunset Blvd*, Billy Wilder set William Holden up with an ageing movie star once again. *Fedora*, shot in hazy colour rather than crisp black-and-white and set in Corfu rather than Hollywood, likewise uses an actress's declining career and unlikely comeback to reveal the ugly side of showbusiness.

The star is Fedora (Marthe Keller), now living as a recluse after her suspiciously long stint in ‘women's pictures’ has ended abruptly. Holden plays Dutch, an independent producer sadly out of touch with the modern movie industry (which is ruled by “kids with beards”), who wants Fedora to star in a new adaptation of *Anna Karenina*. He also wants to rekindle their one-sided romance, which began for him when they had a one-night stand while shooting a movie decades previously. The thrust of the



Theatre of revolt: *Electra, My Love*

story is Dutch's dogged pursuit of Fedora, and once he has found her, the slow revelation of her grisly secret. Michael York and Henry Fonda appear as themselves, adding authenticity to the Hollywood satire. It's a leisurely kind of suspense film, though, and the network of flashbacks that complicates the narrative doesn't manage to inject quite enough tension.

According to Wilder, Fedora is a composite of “Garbo, Swanson, Dietrich, Lombard and Monroe” and it is tempting to think that had the two lead female roles gone to Dietrich and Faye Dunaway, as he originally hoped, rather than Keller and Hildegard Knef, the film would have had a little more bite. Still, this sickly intrigue is a beguiling late work by a director who knew what it meant to be living one's last days in Hollywood.

Disc: The Masters of Cinema Blu-ray replicates the sun-bleached sepia palette well, and offers extras in the form of a booklet containing two new essays and a behind-the-scenes piece, plus deleted scenes and a restoration demo.

LITTLE FAUSS AND BIG HALSY

Sidney J. Furie; US 1970; Olive Films/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 99 minutes; 2.35:1

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The tortoise and the hare reworked as the beta male and the alpha, with some original Johnny Cash songs and the moral kept pretty much the same, bittersweet buddy picture *Little Fauss and Big Halsy* is powered by the chemistry generated by Robert Redford and Michael J. Pollard. You can probably guess which is which – Pollard's ‘Little’ Fauss is a myopic wannabe motorcycle racer whose real genius is for engineering, and who's stuck living with his folks in some jerkwater Arizona town and dreaming of the big time; Redford is Halsy Knox, a seasoned (and sloshed) professional whose life is a regimen of booze, more-or-less-willing trophy girls and petty larceny, dreaming of more of the same. Little naturally looks up to Halsy at first, and for a while they do all right as a team, until Halsy gets his hooks in a gal Little wants for himself, setting the table for a final speedway face-off. (The gal is Lauren Hutton, who reads a paperback of *The Soft Machine* for the entire year-plus timeline of the movie.)

Director Sidney J. Furie had previously gone as far as one could go with a homoerotic biker picture in 1964 with *The Leather Boys*, and he serves his stars well and gives the picture a nice coating of southwestern dust and grit, though a great deal of credit for *Little Fauss and Big Halsy*'s



Wilder people: *Fedora*

peculiar charms and elliptical storytelling must go to screenwriter Charles Eastman. Eastman's sister Carole was also in the business: her *Five Easy Pieces* was released the same year, and the two movies share a sharp ear for American vernacular speech (Little's mother listing dessert options is a particular highlight) and don't-give-a-damn cad antiheroes, pawning off their considerable gifts for a good time.

Redford, who spends significantly more than half of the movie without a shirt on and is seen compulsively brushing his immaculate BS artist's grin, brings all the requisite moral vacuity and snake-oil-salesman charm to the part, by turns brusquely vicious and irresistibly funny, making hay with a line like “Well, if that's friendship, I'm aghast” – which also might sum up the picture.

Disc: A handsome coming-out for what is, unbelievable as it seems considering the star power involved, the first bow of the film in the DVD/Blu-ray era.

MATINEE

Joe Dante; US 1993; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate PG; 99 minutes; 1.85:1. Features: interviews with Joe Dante, cast and crew, ‘Paranoia in Ant Vision’ discussion with Dante, ‘Mant!’ full-length version, ‘making of’ featurette, on-set footage, deleted and extended scenes, theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Cheerfully hopping between genres, Joe Dante's fond homage to 60s B-movies doesn't know (and doesn't care) if it's a creature-feature pastiche, a coming-of-age drama about the Cuban Missile Crisis or a cinema-crazy period comedy. Only its reverently realised exploitation film-within-a-film *Mant!* (a standout extra here, offered in its assembled form) really pulls it off, with its note-perfect screaming close-ups and army general Kevin McCarthy's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*-honed gravitas.

The teen story strand, busy debunking ‘duck and cover’ and guying awkward first loves, while amiable, lacks the satirical strength of Dante's earlier *Gremlins*. But John Goodman's guileful, gimmick-toting huckster producer Lawrence Woolsey, modelled affectionately on William Castle, brings irresistible carnival energy to the proceedings with his seat buzzers and ‘Rumble-Rama’. In an age of increasingly atomised film viewing, there's an additional nostalgia in the communal chaos he creates, and in Woolsey's paean to the direct line from caveman storytelling to the group scare of cinema-going. Cameos by John Sayles and Roger Corman

veteran Dick Miller as a couple of deadpan moral-majority protesters secretly shilling for Woolsey are a small but significant delight.

Disc: A nifty transfer, with appropriately zinging colour-saturated tones. The bulging extras package is a positive bran tub.

ODDS AGAINST TOMORROW

Robert Wise; US/1959; BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 95 minutes; Certificate 12; Features: interviews (Harry Belafonte, Robert Ryan, Robert Wise), appreciation (Adrian Wootton), trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Bridging the civil rights and McCarthyite eras (the latter thanks to a screenplay co-written by the then blacklisted Abraham Polonsky, credited here as 'John O. Killens'), this suspense about three bank robbers with very different personalities and motivations is given an additional charge by the fact that Slater (Robert Ryan) is extremely reluctant to work with a black man like Ingram (Harry Belafonte), despite the latter's ample qualifications. Jean-Pierre Melville was a big fan, and it's easy to see why: as with his own best films, a straightforward, almost high-concept scenario is given heft by the complexity of the characterisation and performances.

Ryan is expectedly excellent as the older man, a war veteran who has never quite fitted into peacetime society and who, despite being in a stable relationship with Shelley Winters, is visibly struggling to cope with significant societal changes. However, Belafonte's Ingram is the film's revelation, a man who is as much a victim of his own substantial personal flaws as he is of wider societal prejudice, as illustrated by the scenes with his former wife (Kim Hamilton) and children. For all their bravado, both men are extremely

vulnerable, as is their notional leader Burke (Ed Begley), and the film's near-constant tension derives just as much from our awareness of this as from more traditional heist mechanics. That said, the latter are handled by director Robert Wise with his usual brio: for all the film's pretensions towards unearthing deeper truths, Wise never forgets that his audience came to watch a thriller.

Some of the messages must have seemed a tad clunky even in 1959 – did we really need a nudging sign pointing to a dead end? But the film's pleasures are still substantial: Joseph C. Brun's high-contrast cinematography; some well-chosen New York locations; and a soundtrack by the Modern Jazz Quartet incorporating a couple of onscreen Belafonte musical numbers that manage to be more than just a sop to his wider fanbase – especially when he tries to conduct a potentially life-threatening conversation mid-performance.

Disc: The nicely crisp transfer is framed at the director-preferred Academy aspect ratio. The accompanying interviews total over three hours, and although the only film-specific one is an engaging Harry Belafonte post-screening Q&A from 2009, there's plenty of autobiographical meat in the NFT interviews with Ryan (1969) and Wise (1995) and some solid critical analysis from Adrian Wootton (video) and Tega Okiti (booklet).

PARIS BLUES

Martin Ritt; US 1961; BFI/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 12; 106 minutes; 1.66:1; Features: audio commentary by Adrian Martin, stills gallery, original trailer, essay booklet

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Cooked up hastily because Paul Newman and Sidney Poitier had signed on, Martin Ritt's well-intentioned if heavy-handed drama about

expatriate jazzmen in Paris has taken some critical beatings in its time. Everything has come under the cosh, from its unabashedly touristic settings and matched pair of same-race romances to its clichéd look at jazz lifestyles, with only Duke Ellington's fine score of jazz standards spared. Adrian Martin's laudably well-researched audio commentary tackles this head-on but is acute about the film's pleasures, notably Newman's understated Method portrayal, in one of his several 'outsider' roles for Ritt. Joanne Woodward, touching as the small-town tourist who falls for him, is even better. Poitier and Diahann Carroll, locked into clunky discussions of US racial prejudice and French colour-blindness, fare less well (Rashida K. Bragg's booklet essay usefully unpacks the film's treatment of race, starting with the French child who dubs Poitier "Monsieur Noir").

Like the staid cousin of John Cassavetes's *Shadows* (1959) or *Too Late Blues* (1961), the film displays the jazz subculture and the new sexual mores but stays firmly in the moral mainstream, providing a kind of cultural tourism, along with its Seine-side walks and Notre Dame backdrops. Key to its enjoyment is recognising the artistry of its artificiality, in Alexandre Trauner's picturesquely Parisian sets (echoed in his work on *'Round Midnight*, a quarter of a century later) and the classical camerawork of veteran cinematographer Christian Matras.

Disc: A first-rate Blu-ray transfer with excellent sound quality (every bead of sweat, as well as every note, registers in Louis Armstrong's 'Battle Royal'). Nicolas Pillai's jazz-infused essay is the standout booklet addition.

PEOPLE OF THE MOUNTAINS

Istvan Szots; Hungary 1942; Second Run/Region O DVD; Certificate 15; 88 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: booklet notes by Hungarian film expert John Cunningham

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Although this remarkable peasant saga shot in the peaks of Transylvania was supposedly a formative influence on the Italian neorealists, its prizewinning showing at the Venice Film Festival in 1942 was its only international exposure before later falling out of favour with the post-war Hungarian authorities. Among cinephiles at home, however, its reputation as one of the nation's greatest celluloid treasures has stood firm over the years – hence the recent gleaming digital restoration that has facilitated this DVD release from the ever-enterprising Second Run.

What's most striking is the sheer beauty on screen, whether in the remote location work, where stoic locals battle the elements at altitudes high enough to peek through the cloud cover, or in the expertly lit interiors, as the central couple begin to realise that the monetary rewards on offer from the new logging company may come at a bitter price indeed. Thus begins a potent cautionary tale, with a proto-environmental angle, since the monetisation of the ancient forests spells the end for a hardy peasant community that's long eked out a living in respectful harmony with this rugged, remote landscape.

His characters silhouetted against the clouds and rolling slopes, talented



Odds Against Tomorrow A straightforward, almost high-concept scenario is given heft by the complexity of the characterisation and performances

Television

THE JUSTICE GAME

Norman Stone; UK 1989; BBC/Simply Media/

Region 2 DVD; Certificate 15; 350 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

An old man in a beret is stabbed to death at a lonely Glasgow bus stop, a tenement full of drug dealers is burned down by balaclava-clad men with automatic weapons and grenades, a private detective is found dead in his submerged Triumph Herald... somehow Michael Kitchen's saturnine transatlantic tycoon is involved, and as the body-count mounts, hotshot lawyer Dominic Rossi (Denis Lawson) starts to put two and two together.

It's recognisably by the same writer as *The One Game* (Home Cinema, S&S, November), John Brown: clever, charming, arrogant hero and enigmatic villains lurking in shadows. But the mysticism of that earlier show is here replaced, thankfully, with a political undercurrent. Rossi is working-class made good, and not entirely comfortable with the 'made good' part; and this is the same late Thatcher-era Glasgow portrayed with more humour by John Byrne in *Your Cheatin' Heart* a year later – upscale restaurants and bars sprouting, the city getting spruced up, and the inhabitants not entirely comfortable with that. The second series has Rossi moving on in his career and acquiring an Italian girlfriend, who inevitably turns out to have a dark past.

Lawson's charm is undermined by dialogue that is never quite as smart as it wants to be, and by some terrible late-80s tailoring (those padded shoulders! Those blouson jackets!). But if anything, it's over-cast – Diana Quick, Barbara Flynn, Iain Cuthbertson aren't really given enough to do – and the period aesthetics (and period morals) are fascinating.

Disc: It's unclear whether it's the source of the transfer, but the picture is a little washed and dialogue gets swallowed up from time to time. Unfortunately, the subtitles are very careless: a reference to Ally's Tartan Army (of 1978 World Cup fame) is transcribed as "Alec has taught an army", and at points quite audible sentences are represented by the note '(INDISTINCT)'.

THE LEGEND OF KING ARTHUR

Rodney Bennett; UK 1979; BBC/Simply Media/

Region 2 DVD; Certificate PG; 240 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

The main interest of this retelling is that it's an early venture into the classics by Andrew Davies. He plays Malory pretty straight, but gives the narrative more of an arc: Morgan Le Fay is introduced as a small girl, horrified when her father is murdered and her mother snatched away by Uther Pendragon; her revenge, Arthur's downfall, is played out from the first episode. It is set in a world that looks mostly Anglo-Saxon and not very regal – helmets influenced by Sutton Hoo, round shields, lots of natural fibres – though some of the costumes suggest a kind of *Doctor Who* medievalism (see, for example, 'Castrovalva', 1982). Bennett directs without flair, and the cast is so-so; interesting to see Robert Eddison's slightly hammy Merlin – seemingly a dry run for his Grail Knight in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* a decade later.

Disc: A perfectly OK representation of ropy BBC late 70s teatime serial aesthetics.



The Organization It has all the late 20th century's cynicism about business, but the confidence to treat it as more amusing than terrifying

THE ORGANIZATION

UK 1971; Yorkshire TV/Network/Region 2 DVD;

Certificate 12; 350 minutes; 1.33:1

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

The opening credits – with a Johnny Dankworth jazz theme and shots of a brutalist concrete tower block – give an impression of modernity and toughness: for about five minutes this looks like a drama about swashbuckling cut-throat entrepreneurs, doing whatever it takes to turn a penny, clinch a deal, screw the opposition. Then the first twist happens, and it becomes clear that it is much funnier and slyer than that. Really, it's about the way that a modern business environment can disguise old-fashioned muddle and status struggles, in which the product and bottom line can seem rather distant, abstract concepts: the only thing that really matters is keeping your head down and keeping hold of your job. It has all the late 20th century's cynicism about business, but the confidence to treat it as more amusing than terrifying.

The scripts are by Philip Mackie, who would go on to write the much lauded Quentin Crisp biodrama *The Naked Civil Servant* (1975), and perhaps there are hints here of a rebellion against suit-wearing conformity. Each of the seven episodes concentrates on two members of the PR department at the Greatrick corporation (not a greatjoke) – one of them is carried over into the next story. The structure allows the narrative to move along while offering shifting perspectives on events that have already happened; it has the disadvantage of stretching plot lines out. Mackie's dialogue is sharp and

odd, full of comic repetitions and banalities that owe something to N.F. Simpson's domestic absurdism as well as, more obviously, Pinter.

An immaculate ensemble delivers it brilliantly: a very young Peter Egan as the keen young newcomer, trying to bluff his way up the greasy pole with no particular sense of why he's bothering; Anton Rodgers as his boffinish boss, with thick-rimmed glasses and paperwork spilling out of his arms everywhere he goes; Bernard Hepton as the faintly creepy, nerve-driven press officer; Norman Bird, so underrated, as the stodgy, submissive time-server pushed into retirement in the first two episodes (one of those overstretched storylines). Lording it over them all is a leonine, Machiavellian Donald Sinden – not that he's more Machiavellian than others, just more blatant about it; blatancy may be one of his weapons.

The cast is rounded out by a pair of really excellent performances by comparatively little-known women: Elaine Taylor is Sinden's invaluable PA, smiling, lying, nodding, ignoring, all with an imperturbable, faintly ironic air; Jill Melford is the sarcastic divorcee struggling to reconcile her need for the job with her contempt for it.

For its time, it is shot with surprising briskness. Where it shows its age is in its comparatively forgiving view of capitalism: for ruthless businessmen, this lot spend a lot of time wondering how to let a sacked employee down gently, and they show remarkable loyalty to the unseen, all-seeing chairman.

Disc: Picture and sound are both pretty good.

New releases

director Istvan Szots (who was to make only one other feature before fleeing for Austria in 1956) frames all this as a truly elemental conflict, but one that, perhaps surprisingly, isn't played out in specifically political terms. Certainly the locals are no match for the wily landowners, or indeed the country's legal system, but what keeps them bound by a common purpose is a deeply held Catholicism, in which religious festivals and observances are seen as integral to their cultural identity.

Szots plays it dead straight, and the film's sincerity is as problematic now for western film critics as it doubtless was for the Soviet-dominated Budapest regime for decades after its release. Yet this gives a rough-hewn integrity to the portrayal of the daily reality of these gnarly mountain folk. An impressive, worthwhile discovery.

Disc: The 2k transfer from the original nitrate negatives by the Hungarian Digital Archive and Film Institute shows off cameraman Ferenc Fekete's at times exquisite visuals. Otherwise, a barebones disc, though the booklet helpfully fleshes out the contentious historical context – and this marks the first release anywhere in the English-speaking world of an undeniably valuable title.

FILMS BY DOUGLAS SIRK

A SCANDAL IN PARIS/LURED

Douglas Sirk; US 1946/47; Cohen Film Collection/Region A Blu-ray; 99/103 minutes; 1.33:1; Features: audio commentaries by Wade Majors and Jeremy Arnold

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Amid the American programmers that Sirk spent a decade making in Hollywood after emigrating, before the vivid, big-budget Ross Hunter melodramas which eventually formed his reputation, these two luscious matinee daydreams are exception – virtually constructed wholly out of studio-set cobblestone, costume-bin chicanery and fog-machine atmosphere. Sirk's eloquence and exuberant staging are as manifest as his high-culture Europeanness.

A Scandal in Paris is tailor-made for the recent émigré (you couldn't say that about a dozen other films he made between 1943 and 1952): a tongue-in-cheek biopic of the late-18th/early-19th-century French bandit-detective Vidocq, with George Sanders handily smirking over the frilled collars and rolling his vowels like boules. It conscientiously looks like a Lang film designed by Aubrey Beardsley (the design team included Eugen Schüfftan); at times the actors become overwhelmed by a welter of giant friezes, ornate murals and faux icons.

The cast nevertheless shines: Akim Tamiroff, as Vidocq's apish criminal sidekick, is dreadfully unsubtle, but Sanders is in classic silky form, while Signe Hasso and Carole Landis, as the antihero's love interests, are fierce, funny and ravishing. Sirk even gets a spot-on performance from a capuchin monkey.

Lured signals its aesthetic intentions in the credits, as old London signage is illuminated by a flashlight beam. Set in the then present, but quickly overcome with timeless gaslight (it's not an England that knew WWII), the movie is a murder mystery in which Scotland Yard enlists out-of-work Yankee broad Lucille Ball



Flower girl: *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*

to act as bait for a personal-ad serial killer (who may or may not be Casanova/theatre producer George Sanders). Even the forensics are made rich and fascinating, and the supporting cast is a hive of eccentrics, particularly Boris Karloff as a red-herring lunatic who solicits girls to play-act his own glorious fashion-designing past amid mannequins and an enthroned bulldog (another terrific animal perf). It's also George Zucco's finest hour, looking every bit like Keith Moon Sr, truckling around as an undercover dick forced to watch over the irritatingly sassy Ball. Craftily written (by Leo Rosten), with triple twists that would only become familiar stuff in the 80s, it's as inventive, confident and spry as B-movies got.

Disc: Beautiful digital restorations, with audio commentaries that tend towards the trivial.

THE STORY OF THE LAST CHRYSANTHEMUM

Mizoguchi Kenji; Japan 1939; Criterion Collection/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 143 minutes; 1.37:1; Features: new interview with Phillip Lopate on the evolution of Mizoguchi's style, essay by Dudley Andrew

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

Shochiku Studios and director Mizoguchi Kenji went with the title *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum*, presumably, because *The Story of a Thwarted Woman Who, with No Other Outlet for Her Emotional and Creative Energy, Pours It All into the Unworthy Vessel of a Shirking Beneficiary of Nepotism, in the Process Achieving a Gut-Wrenching Kind of Tragic Grandeur* was considered a bit too clunky, or maybe 'on the nose'.

The film, as mentioned, concerns a star-crossed love affair between Kikunosuke (Hanayagi Shotaro), the talentless but well-situated heir to a kabuki family, and Otoku (Mori Kakuko), the lower-class wet nurse of his dad's new baby. 'Kiku' is surrounded by sycophants, but Otoku gives him the first constructive criticism he's ever heard in his life, and after that he's putty in her hands – for a while, at least, though being disowned and reduced to the status of itinerant actor puts a bit of pressure on the relationship. Kiku's family and professional connections behave awfully towards him after he compromises his birthright, and in due time he behaves awfully towards Otoku, and all of this is all the more awful because Mizoguchi allows you to understand exactly where everyone is coming from, and doesn't even allow you the indulgence of being able to resent any of the players – the world is a stage, and how can you resent actors for hitting their marks?

The film lingers in the memory as a suite of long-shot long takes – Kiku and Otoku cutting and enjoying watermelon slices together in more innocent times, Kiku grovelling at the side of Otoku's deathbed when, far too late, they've been given permission to marry – unfolding at the speed of life. You can find echoes in the New Taiwanese Cinema and elsewhere, but to call it a 'precursor' to anything would be reductive; *The Story of the Last Chrysanthemum* simply is.

Disc: The restoration struggles manfully against the source materials, improving noticeably on the UK Curzon Artificial Eye release, though it isn't wholly free of some inherited wear-and-tear issues. Watched on a cracked smartphone or projected on a bedsheet, it's still a heartbreaker.

WILD HORSES

Robert Duvall; US 2014; Arrow Films/Region B Blu-ray; Certificate 12; 99 minutes; 2.35:1; Features: 'making of'

Reviewed by Brad Stevens

Although Robert Duvall's once-a-decade ventures into directing can hardly compare with Clint Eastwood's prolific output, these actor-auteurs clearly have a great deal in common, not least an increasing tendency to cast themselves as ageing traditionalists confronting a changing modern world.

In his latest (and probably last) directorial effort, *Wild Horses*, Duvall plays Scott Briggs, a rancher whose conflict with his gay son Ben (James Franco) has led to him being accused of killing Ben's male lover. Although the film is ostensibly both a thriller – in which the murder is investigated by Samantha Payne (played by the director's wife, Luciana Duvall), a Texas Ranger who just happens to be a woman ("We can vote now as well," she informs a bemused Briggs) – and a melodrama about generational conflict, it is difficult to imagine anything more laidback than this small gem, which is primarily concerned with the precise observation of a specific milieu.

As befits a film directed by an actor, *Wild Horses* is sensitively attuned to the personas of its lead performers, giving weight to the central dispute by evoking memories of the patriarchs Duvall portrayed in *The Great Santini* (1979) and *Tender Mercies* (1983), as well as those hints of homosexuality that frequently accrue to Franco's roles. The result is ultimately neither conservative nor liberal but (again as with Eastwood) concerned with testing the limitations of the conservative position in a manner that resists easy categorisation.

Duvall's *mise en scène* is dominated by lovingly observed vistas and long takes in which actors are granted the time and, crucially, the space they need to develop their characters, an approach that gives the film an appropriately traditional feel while placing it in opposition to those stylistic traits currently dominating America's commercial cinema, whose assumptions it implicitly subjects to extensive criticism. *Wild Horses* thus manages to be both an example of old-fashioned craftsmanship and a *film maudit* whose failure to obtain a UK theatrical release should be worn as a badge of honour.

Disc: The anamorphically enhanced transfer fully captures the beauty of Duvall's widescreen compositions. 🍷

Lost and found

THE BRAT

OVERLOOKED FILMS CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE ON UK DVD OR BLU-RAY

It may be minor Ford – but an early comedy of New York manners lays the foundations for the director's later masterpieces

By Glenn Kenny

There are occasions in movie-going life when low expectations yield to delightful surprise and even epiphany. I had not read up on *The Brat*, a 1931 picture directed by John Ford, prior to seeing a restored presentation from the Museum of Modern Art screened at the 73rd Venice Film Festival in September. (The restoration is also part of MoMA's 'To Save and Project' series in New York, which runs from 2-23 November.) So I didn't recall critic Scott Eyman's dismissal of the comic melodrama as "the worst picture Ford ever made". But Ford's own assessment of the film was right there in the programme notes of the Venice catalogue (culled from Peter Bogdanovich's interview book): "That was just one of those damn things they handed you."

Ford's dismissiveness notwithstanding, the movie's credits make a big deal of his participation right off the bat. The opening title card's 'A John Ford Production' is in larger type than 'Fox Film Corporation', and the 'Directed By John Ford' single credit that follows verges on ostentatious. It's instructive, at times, to be reminded that Ford was an industry figure of no little clout well before *Stagecoach* (1939).

The movie that follows struck me at first as a breezy, sassy confection with intriguing Fordian touches. It's about a cheeky young Depression waif temporarily adopted (for 'research') by an upper-crust novelist. The opening scene, set in a New York City night court, is an almost exemplary Ford bustle, replete with colourful character bits and near-expressionist camera views (when the titular brat, the wide-eyed and tiny Sally O'Neil, is pressed up against a hefty, tall cop, the shot from her perspective is an impressive low-angle intimidation).

'The Brat', as she will be called throughout (albeit not by the kindly, worldly judge who lends her to his novelist pal MacMillan Forester), has been hauled in for trying to skip out on the bill at an Italian restaurant, and the competing accents in the testimony are as broad as you might imagine. More interesting is one of the Brat's fellow miscreants, a haughty old woman accused of shoplifting who is revealed to have once been a *grande dame* of the Shakespearean stage. On being given a break by the judge, she launches into Portia's 'quality of mercy' speech and is applauded by the gallery. Of course, Ford fans will think of the actor reciting Hamlet's soliloquy, assisted by Doc Holliday, in *My Darling Clementine* (1946).

A pleasant enough auteurist connection, but that wasn't the epiphany. Later, when the Brat is installed at MacMillan's family mansion and familiarised with its inhabitants and frequent



Wide-eyed waif: Sally O'Neil as the eponymous Brat in John Ford's comic melodrama

Could it be that this breezy, sassy confection contains a rehearsal for the end of 'Stagecoach'?

visitors (imperious mother, two vampish would-be fiancées, a pompous but kindly bishop and a bald Irish butler whom the Brat immediately nicknames 'Curly'), we, and she, meet MacMillan's drunkard brother Stephen (Frank Albertson). In the first of several chiding-the-upper-classes bits, the Brat expresses slangy indignation that MacMillan and mother intend to leave a pickled Steve at the bottom of the stairs, and she and the butler help him up to his room.

Later, as they begin to get to know each other, Stephen tells the Brat, "I'm a misfit here in this house," and describes his ideal life: tending the western ranch left to him by his late father.

It was at this point in the film that my jaw almost dropped. Could it be that this picture, based, per Ford biographer Tag Gallagher, on "a trivial Maud Fulton drawing-room comedy of manners", contains a rehearsal for the ending of *Stagecoach*? In that picture, John Wayne's outlaw, the Ringo Kid, having placed himself in a legally dicey predicament by avenging the death of his brother, seeks not more gunplay but merely an exit to a destination where he can be at peace: his ranch. Ringo earns his way back to Eden through his heroic conduct in getting the stage to Lordsburg, after one more gunfight in town. "They're saved from the blessings of civilisation," Thomas Mitchell's Doc observes, as he and George Bancroft's kindly marshal send off Ringo and his fellow misfit, the now former prostitute Dallas.

In *The Brat*, the ranch dreamed of by Stephen has been earmarked for sale by MacMillan and his mother; the former hopes to build a yacht with the proceeds. Nearly simultaneous with the Brat's discovery that, despite her flirtation with MacMillan, "it was Steve all along" that she has adored, she delivers a 'you ought to be ashamed of yourselves' speech to her hosts on discovering their scheme. Their minds changed, she marries Stephen and off to the ranch they go. The pre-echo of *Stagecoach* doesn't change the status of *The Brat* from minor to major but, like Hitchcock's borrowing of a torn-curtain shot from DeMille's 1923 *The Ten Commandments* for 1960's *Psycho*, it highlights what the critic Dave Kehr (who, in his capacity as a MoMA curator, brought *The Brat* to Venice) has called the magpie-like industriousness of certain filmmakers of genius. 

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID



'A mild but rather pleasant bit about a street waif and a wealthy novelist. The street waif says "erl" for oil and "goil" for girl. The whole thing is familiar stuff and it probably does not deserve the talented direction and photography which John Ford has brought to it. The cast, headed by Sally O'Neil as the Cinderella and Allan Dinehart as the novelist, likewise deserves a meed of praise for making something out of practically nothing.'

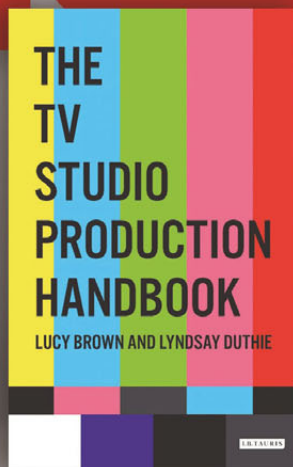
Mordaunt Hall 'The New York Times', 1931

Read



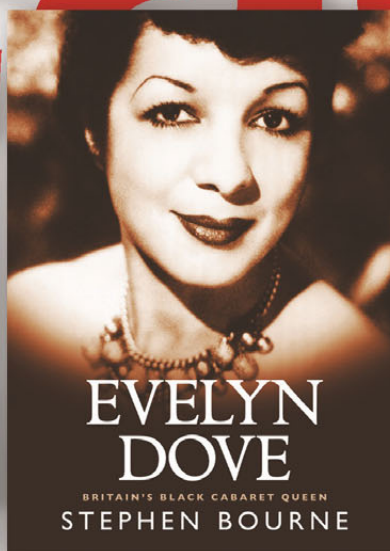
THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO MUCH

By Murray Pomerance, BFI Film Classics, Palgrave, 96pp, paperback, £12.99, ISBN 9781844579556
Introducing the first book on *The Man Who Knew Too Much* (1956), one of Alfred Hitchcock's greatest masterpieces – a Technicolor Hollywood remake of his 1934 British thriller. Eminent Hitchcock specialist Murray Pomerance offers an illuminating account of one of Hitchcock's most successful films, starring James Stewart and Doris Day. Through a close reading of the film alongside analysis of its complex production history – with a script that was unfinished when filming began and location shooting in Marrakesh and London – Pomerance underlines its significance within Hitchcock's oeuvre.
bit.ly/2dRXzhm



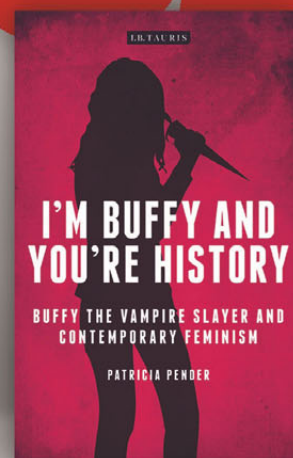
THE TV STUDIO PRODUCTION HANDBOOK

By Lucy Brown & Lyndsay Duthie, I.B. Tauris, 240pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781784536282
Here is the one-stop handbook to make your studio production shine. *The TV Studio Production Handbook* explains the production process from beginning to end, covering everything there is to know about creating a successful studio television programme. Packed with interviews from top executives from the UK, USA, Australia and China, it includes case studies from hit international formats, from reality to drama to news – with scripts from *Britain's Got Talent*, *Big Brother*, *Coronation Street*, *Teletubbies*, *Channel 4 News* and more. Written by award-winning programme-makers, the book breaks television down genre by genre and explores pre-production, casting, scripting and paperwork, from call sheets to running orders. The authors also examine the future of studio and the multiplatform opportunities available for programme makers internationally.
www.ibtauris.com



EVELYN DOVE Britain's Black Cabaret Queen

By Stephen Bourne, Jacaranda Books Art Music, 160pp, paperback, illustrated, £12.99, ISBN 9781909762350
Bygone pioneer Evelyn Dove was the first black British celebrity to make an impression in the world of entertainment, as a star of revue, variety, cabaret and television. Refusing to be constrained by her race or middle-class West African and English backgrounds, her exceptional career would span five decades, from the 1920s to the 1960s, and open doors in America and across the globe.
This celebration of her work includes more than 40 unpublished photographs from her private collection. The acclaimed historian and author Stephen Bourne is also a contributor to the BFI's *Black Star* compendium. A must-have volume for those interested in jazz and the icons of the age, black history or the history of the BBC, and for academic and cultural institutions.
www.jacarandabooksartmusic.co.uk



I'M BUFFY AND YOU'RE HISTORY

By Patricia Pender, I.B. Tauris, Investigating Cult TV Series, 256pp, hardback, £59, ISBN 9781780767451; paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781780767468
Buffy the Vampire Slayer gave TV viewers an exhilarating alternative to the cliché of a hapless, attractive blonde woman victimised by a murderous male villain. With its strong, capable heroine and witty dialogue, the show became one of the most widely analysed texts in contemporary popular culture. Thirteen years after the last episode, *Buffy* is still an internet and media presence, studied internationally.
Here, Patricia Pender explores the Slayer's postmodern politics, her position as a third wave feminist icon, and her fandom and legacy in popular culture. This is a fresh and challenging contribution to the growing literature on the pleasures of a great cult TV show.
www.ibtauris.com



Night watch: 'The sacred fixed altar has given up its central place of worship and is now just one screen among so many'

THINKING INSIDE THE BOX

TELEVISION

A Biography

By David Thomson, Thames & Hudson, 416pp, £19.95, ISBN 9780500519165

Reviewed by Robert Hanks

Television is entering a new phase in its history, perhaps a terminal one – as David Thomson puts it at the start of this book, “The sacred fixed altar (the set) has given up its central place of worship and is now just one screen among so many.” As we enter a new phase in the relationship with screens that has characterised a lot of the last century, it is a good moment to take stock; and it is a joy to see David Thomson take on the job. Though he’s known as a writer on the big screen, he has always been careful to give television its due – his *Biographical Dictionary of Film* is explicitly about television as well as cinema, and contains a lot of original, even daring thinking about the makers and stars of the box. This new book is perhaps more

obituary than biography, its tone often elegiac, though nostalgia is often undercut by suspicion.

Thomson has divided the book into two parts, ‘The Medium’ and ‘The Messages’, though there is slippage between those concepts. The first, shorter part is a general history of television, which skips over the BBC’s first public broadcasts in the 1930s to trace the story from its beginnings in America in the 40s (Thomson is insufficiently interested in TV outside the States). He tries to work out ways of thinking about it, playing with themes and metaphors – his governing image is ‘the elephant in the room’. It’s not an original phrase, but he gives this elephant a fresh inner life and sense of purpose: it is not just looming, but observing us, reassuring us. He plucks out inconsequential moments or images from television’s flow – a 1965 episode of *The Fugitive*, the blue skies in *Breaking Bad* – and makes unexpected connections: Karl Freund, the cinematographer who shot *The Last Laugh* (1924) for Murnau, *Metropolis* (1927) for Fritz Lang and the Lugosi *Dracula* (1931) also created the shadowless interiors of *The Lucy Show*, starring Lucille Ball.

This section shows off Thomson at his best (which is, bluntly, better – more intriguing, more infuriating, more fun – than just about any other critic). He is always willing to follow a thought where it leads, sometimes into nonsense, sometimes to some unexpected reward; and constantly trying to examine what criticism is doing, insisting that it does not exist in a bubble – that to write about film or TV is always to be concerned with larger themes. Among those central to this book are our ever-increasing levels of anxiety and our ever-shrinking attention spans, with the question implied of how those two might be related. The central fact of television is that it is always either on or off: we accept it – or did, until not too long ago – as a flow. It’s a medium, Thomson says,

This is Thomson at his best, which is, bluntly, more intriguing, more infuriating and more fun than just about any other critic

PHOTOFEST INC (C)

suit to acquiescence; but our acquiescence is matched by its anxiety that we will go away, stop watching (the discussion of Alan Alda, anxiety and *M*A*S*H* is especially enjoyable). He is acute on how keeping a drama going creates new forms, even affects morality: cinema offers closure; in TV's urge to keep stories going forever, there is an element of denial, a fear of endings. There were points when I thought of Don DeLillo's obsession with mortality, as when Thomson writes of "doorkeepers", the actors, chatshow hosts, newsreaders who usher us out of our world into television's. An idea looms of television as the next world, a cold underworld if not a hell (the thought has already been planted by the cover image, from *Poltergeist*).

The second part, 'The Messages', focuses on genres, with chapters on 'plays', documentaries, cop shows, and the modern rise of longform drama. Thomson also grapples honourably with television's portrayal of women (in the 40s Hollywood allowed smart, independent women; TV sent them back to the kitchen) and blackness (O.J., Bill Cosby and 'The loneliness of the role model'). This section picks up many of the strands of argument begun in the first, but has a tendency to slip into listiness – though Thomson gives good list. He also drops astonishing nuggets: in the early days of live drama, CBS broadcast a 30-minute version of *Don Quixote*, directed by Sidney Lumet, with Boris Karloff as Quixote and Grace Kelly as Dulcinea – lost! The NBC executive who established the format of the chatshow was Sigourney Weaver's father: insert your own all-consuming alien metaphor.

I imagine Thomson wouldn't mind me disagreeing with a lot of his opinions – books ask for engagement, not acquiescence. He dwells on television's relationship with cinema, but misses that what it replaced was radio – the smaller elephant (or maybe only a giraffe or a monkey) in the room; in particular, it's from radio that American television borrowed the structures of sponsorship and soap opera. Having lived in the US for many years, Thomson can be too easy on aspects of British television: the "simple wisdom" he detects in the BBC in the 60s ("Turn it off if you can't take it – or shut up and watch") was always much rarer than he implies; then again, it's surprising how little of that insouciance is enough to allow marvellous things to creep through. In praising, of course, Dennis Potter he overlooks the emotional reductiveness of even his greatest work (and weirdly, he states that Potter never went to university: his starry career at Oxford included editing *Isis* and chairing the Labour Club).

But *Television* is alert and curious, unusually happy for a book about TV to grant that its readers might be cultivated in other areas – you're expected to know who Robert Musil is, to get a comparison of *Red Riding* (2009) to "the News as if told by Louis-Ferdinand Céline", even if you think it's a tad fanciful. Thames & Hudson is an art publisher, and the book is over-designed – sentences, not always well-chosen, pulled out and enlarged in the margins, pictures sometimes jostling with the text for attention. But the text holds its own. **S**

THE OLIVER STONE EXPERIENCE

By Matt Zoller Seitz, Abrams Books, 480pp, £30, ISBN 9781419717901

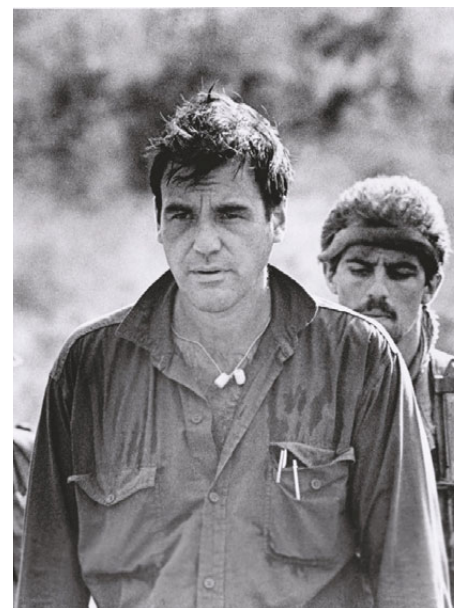
Reviewed by Tim Hayes

"What hath Oliver wrought?" mull'd J. Hoberman in his review of Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006), circling the film with all the expectation due those four freighted words, before finding it to be an apolitical look back at 9/11 from a vantage point in the middle of the Iraq quagmire, perhaps even a rehabilitation for the leftist thunderer in the eyes of the conservative right. Interviewed about his life and films in Matt Zoller Seitz's *The Oliver Stone Experience*, Stone describes *World Trade Center* as being essentially an outside assignment; a welcome excuse not to be a film's prime mover after the audience indifference and critical mauling of *Alexander* (2004). He did, of course, receive some of those all over again anyway, since the only person ready to believe that Oliver Stone was not the prime mover of a film on that topic – or any Oliver Stone film at all – was apparently Stone himself. "They wanted more from me," he tells Seitz. "I'm so tired of their expectations!"

The most intriguing parts of this lavishly illustrated encyclopaedia-scale tome are these later sections, discussing Stone's recent career path and digging into the nuances of this candid if not saturnine mood, sounding somewhere between a lion in winter and a Cassandra who's all talked out. Paths through the director's most analysed 1980s and 1990s thickets (*Platoon*, 1986; *JFK*, 1991; *Natural Born Killers*, 1994) have been worn smooth and are mapped again here, but Seitz and Stone also focus on the films habitually labelled failures – like the misunderstood *Savages* (2012), which employs the symbols and systems of late-period Stone more incisively than anything else in his recent fictional output.

The book follows the format of Seitz's *The Wes Anderson Collection*, with some adjustments for the new subject's different volubility setting. Apart from the rather arch use of blacked-out redacted text for some of that good old Oliver Stone paranoia, a suitably portentous tone is set by the photos and memories from Stone's tour of duty in Vietnam, and the apocalyptic atmosphere of stills from his films.

Some third-party voices contribute this time: Michael Guarnieri's re-edited 2014 essay from The Solute website arguably penetrates deeper than Seitz's affable questioning, although recollection rather than analysis is clearly Seitz's aim. Notwithstanding his affection for Stone and their shared conservative backgrounds, Seitz's investigation of some topics – especially, inevitably, the perceived misogyny in Stone's early scripts – gets stuck in quicksand, even while trying to pay the director a compliment about the female characters he has created since. Stone also footnotes Seitz's introductory essays with comments of his own that beg further



Tour of duty: Oliver Stone

In these later sections Oliver Stone sounds somewhere between a lion in winter and a Cassandra who's all talked out

explication. Before chapter one has even got going, Stone is getting his retaliation in early, saying, "There is this concept throughout your book that I do things in my movies for political reasons, but most of the time I really don't."

Large swathes of Stone's output since 2003 have been nonfiction, including his eight-hour-plus TV series *Oliver Stone's Untold History of the United States* (2012), which, alongside the book by Stone and Peter Kuznick, sang an angry lament for the American century that Seitz opts not to tee up in full again here. If he had, more of Stone's unhappiness with Barack Obama might have helped illuminate this book's last section discussing the forthcoming *Snowden*.

Without it, the book plants a disconcertingly soft landing. But in the process it grasps the filmmaker's inherent, albeit productive, contradictions by setting up a friction of its own: between the fiery young self-explorer at the start and the frustrated chronicler at the end, a man embracing Buddhism while agonising, "I never got a fair shake after *JFK* in terms of the movies... I just can't get anything out there clean," which sounds as much like self-laceration as complaint.

In between, several giant films are given their due respect. Anyone still unaware that *Nixon* (1995) – that endlessly uncoiling serpent of a film, never more relevant to American darkness than right this minute – was originally set to feature Sam Waterston as a demonic CIA director Richard Helms, can benefit from Seitz's public service message naming it "one of the greatest performances ever left on the cutting-room floor, maybe". No maybe about it. **S**

RITUPARNO GHOSH

Cinema, Gender and Art

Edited by Sangeeta Datta, Kaustav Bakshi, Rohit K. Dasgupta; Routledge India; 284pp; £95; ISBN 9781138953901

Reviewed by Debika Ray

The shadows of two storytellers loom large over the Indian state of West Bengal: filmmaker Satyajit Ray, whose body of work includes the acclaimed 'Apu Trilogy', and Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel laureate for literature who wrote the Indian and Bangladeshi national anthems and numerous plays, novels and short stories. Filmmakers in the region are both trapped by comparisons and beholden to the legacy of these creative behemoths – to reject their influence seems pointless; to attempt to transcend them, sacrilege. That is, until Rituparno Ghosh – a director who, until his death in 2013 aged 49, took influence from these predecessors, but exploited the familiarity of their work among the Bengali middle-classes to challenge conservative social norms and elucidate his particular brand of queer and feminist politics.

This new book explores his legacy as a filmmaker and public figure. In a series of essays – as well as interviews with the director and actors who worked with him – it paints a picture of Ghosh's work and his impact on his home city of Kolkata and on wider Indian cinema, culture and politics.

When Ray died in 1992, he left a vacuum in the sphere between arthouse, 'intellectual' films and the commercially driven output of Kolkata's 'Tollywood' studios. Ghosh completed his first film the same year: like Ray, he began in advertising, and drew on this experience to make films that were both considered and captivating, demonstrating an intuitive understanding of the sensibilities of



Ray of light: Rituparno Ghosh's *Raincoat*

the contemporary Bengali bourgeoisie, and a knack for courting cinematic superstars.

His work is laced with Ray's influences – *Chokher Bali* (2003), based on a Tagore novel, makes overt architectural and stylistic references to Ray's *Charulata* (*The Lonely Wife*, 1964); *Antarmahal: Views from the Inner Chamber* (2005), a historical drama about the bride of a feudal landlord, has echoes of Ray's *Goddess* (*Devi*, 1960), a tale of another young woman, who comes to be worshipped as an incarnation of Kali. Yet Ghosh's primary interest was in challenging the heteronormativity and patriarchal norms of his culture. The seeming conservatism of locating the action in middle-class living and dining rooms, and drawing on Tagore's scripts, was discomfited by his exploration of

Ghosh all but eliminates the city from his films, choosing instead to locate the action inside the homes of the privileged few

homosexuality, incest and domestic violence. His female-centric narratives have often been compared to another radical: Pedro Almodóvar.

As scholar Wimal Dissanayake argues, Ghosh was driven by a desire to emancipate women and people with transgender or homosexual desires, drawing parallels between arranged marriage and compulsory heterosexuality. The exploration of same-sex desire was new for Bengali cinema, as was Ghosh's status as an openly gay celebrity. He has, however, been criticised for the scope of his ambition. In an excellent chapter, Sayandeb Chowdhury argues that by locating his action in cloistered interiors, Ghosh limits his radicalism to a particular class and experience. Unlike many of Ray's films, which present the urban environment as liberating, Ghosh all but eliminates the city from his films, choosing instead to locate the action inside the homes of the privileged few.

Nonetheless, this first major study of Ghosh's work highlights how he championed liberal values without compromising his artistic credibility. At a time when India's conservative right is having a resurgence, it seems timely. **S**

PLAY ALL

A Bingewatcher's Notebook

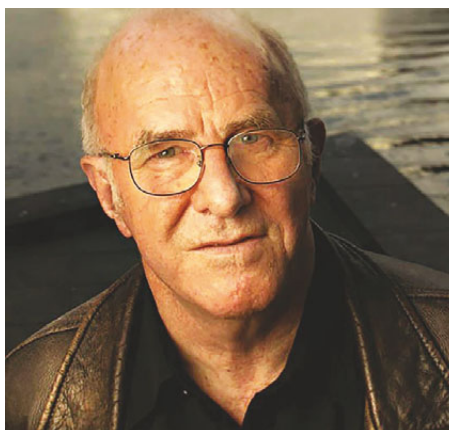
By Clive James, Yale University Press, 216pp, £14.99, ISBN 9780300218091

Reviewed by Henry K. Miller

A third of a century ago, towards the end of Clive James's run as the *Observer's* television critic, he imagined a future in which "all the past material were available from an instantaneous and inexpensive form of data-retrieval", only to dismiss the prospect. "There is barely time to view the present. To view the past as well would take all the time in the world." That dream has become something like reality, and the problem he identified then is acute now. Time weighs heavily on this short book on the box-set boom, written, as he says on the first page, "in these recent years of my illness, while it went on happily refraining from being fatal". The title takes on added significance, he goes on, "in the lives of those of us who have run so short of time that time no longer matters, and who are thus able to choose exactly what we want to see next".

What exactly he chooses to see is not confined to the canon: bingeing, for James, means channel-hopping as well as chowing

down on episodic dramas, which accounts for his familiarity with late-period Steven Seagal movies, and not all of his favoured series are the gushed-over products of HBO and AMC. One sentence begins, "We were binge-watching *The Following* at the time..." – a demonstration of true commitment. The lion's share of attention goes to *The Sopranos* [1999–2007], *The West Wing* [1999–2006], *The Wire* [2002–2008] and the rest; but temperamentally he is a viewer of television, in all its variety, as opposed to the box-set, and



Point of view: Clive James

so "the screen stories, as I shuffle the boxes in which they are contained, tend to blend together, like a Cowes regatta sucked into the Sargasso".

Play All is not, as he more or less admits, and with good reason, his finest critical performance. The best of it appeared in a recent *New Yorker* essay on *Game of Thrones*, perhaps benefiting from that magazine's editorial rigour. What is most valuable in the book is its evocation of viewing and talking as an indivisible social and family practice, which criticism ought to live up to. The besetting sin of intellectuals, he remarks (from his home in a northern suburb of Cambridge), "is to imagine you aren't part of the crowd. But you are: the lesson that the twentieth century should have taught all intellectuals." James's main viewing partners are his daughters, and part of the comedy of the book derives from his not wholly reconstructed attitudes being tested: "The women in my family assure me that I'm a clear case of what Birgitte [the embattled heroine of *Borgen*, played by Sidse Babbett Knudsen] was up against all along," he writes.

In 1981 James wrote that even the best programmes "make fleeting marks behind our eyes and slip away", adding, "We hope it leaves a wrack behind, but can't be sure what the wrack is." In this volume he shows that the wrack is not solely composed of what was on screen. **S**



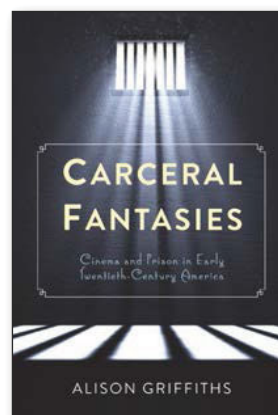
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The book analyzes a wide range of horror cinema — including *The Vampire Lectures* (1999), *The Devil Notebooks* (2009), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and others — as a reaction to the pivotal shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 film, *Psycho*. The author argues that this scene constitutes a foundational moment of traumatic rupture to which subsequent horror film and in particular 'slasher' and 'splatter' movies offer varied reworkings and responses. This book pursues this trope as thematic through subsequent generations of film, utilizing psychoanalytic film theory to extend and contextualize its argument.



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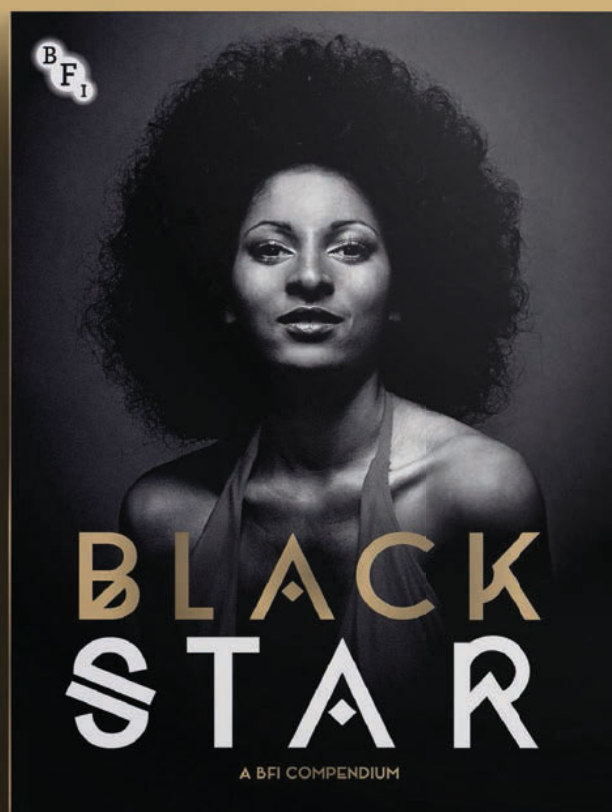
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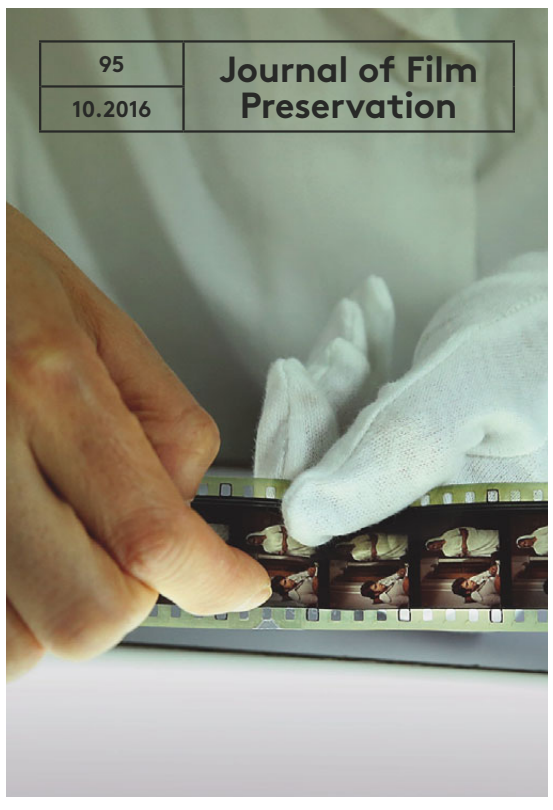
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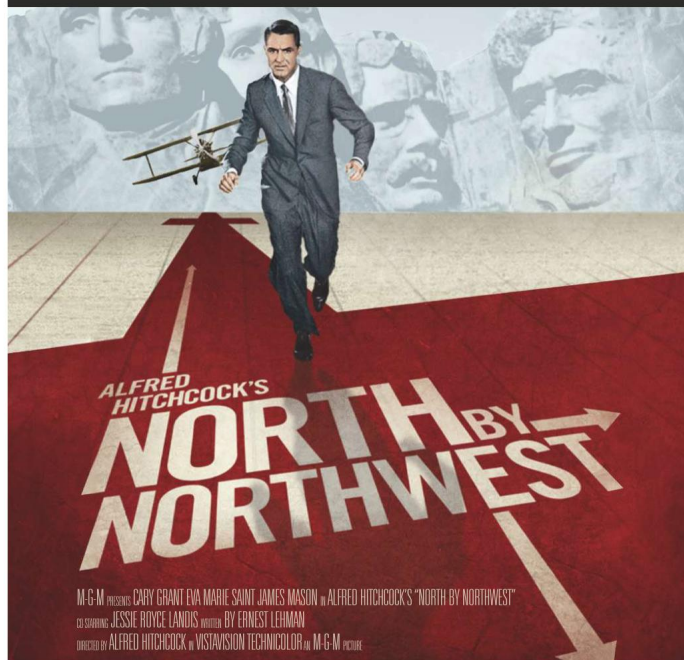
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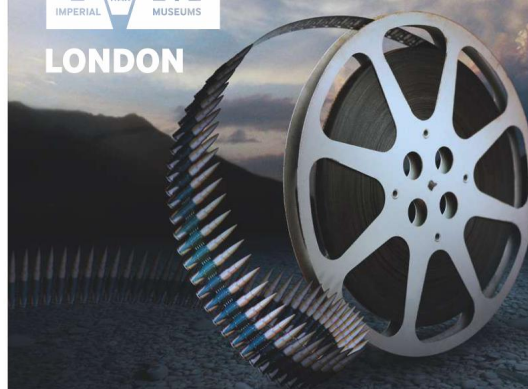
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READERS' LETTERS

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Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

DISASTER ARIA

Kate Stables's review of *Carmen Jones* (Home Cinema, *S&S*, November) contains an error. She states that Dorothy Dandridge and Harry Belafonte were dubbed by white opera singers. Marilyn Horne was white, (although she married an African-American conductor). LeVern Hutcherson, who dubbed Harry Belafonte, was a black opera singer.

Peter Locke By email

A MAN CALLED HORSE

Although it in no way detracts from Ashley Clark's point in his piece 'Burning Illusions' (*S&S*, November), he has misremembered *The Full Monty*. Paul Barber's character is not named 'Horse' after the size of his penis. Rather it's this nickname that persuades his fellow strippers that he's well-endowed – wrongly, as it turns out. Barber's is the only black character in a troupe that was originally conceived as multi-ethnic, becoming predominantly white in the finished film for commercial reasons, and I was surprised to see Clark make no mention of this.

Emily Redstone By email

LOUD MOUTH

I wish to advise Mark Cousins to maintain his own hearing and skip anything which might require earplugs ('Pump up the volume', *S&S*, November). Moreover, I wish to inform everyone that deafness is, in my case, accompanied by painful sensitivity to loud noises. While I think very well of Cousins's criticism, his works and character, he's really off the tracks here.

Bob Jacobson London

TWILIGHT ZONE

What a pleasure to read Brad Stevens's reappraisal of the 70s films of Robert Aldrich ('Not fade away', *S&S*, November), particularly when the consensus (even from critics as perceptive as Andrew Sarris and James Monaco) seemed to be that, by that time, Aldrich was over the hill. Not so: the article eloquently uncovers their richness and complexity, and Aldrich was surely right in claiming *Twilight's Last Gleaming* (1977) as his masterpiece.

I was also delighted by the perceptive reference to Richard Brooks's *Wrong Is Right* (aka *The Man With the Deadly Lens*, 1982), another late masterwork from an underrated director, which, like *Twilight*, is a brilliant blend of thriller and satire, as well as remarkably prescient about the future direction of American politics. Isn't it strange when some movies, dismissed as anachronistic on first release, turn out to be years ahead of their time?

Neil Sinyard Lincolnshire

NOSTALGIA AIN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE

I am pleased Artificial Eye is releasing Tarkovsky's films on Blu-ray, but disappointed by the extras. The decision has been taken to include a video essay by Mary Wild on all of the discs. This seems

LETTER OF THE MONTH

BLEAK MOMENTS AND HIGH HOPES



The BFI should be applauded for drawing attention to the contribution made by black actors; and plaudits to *Sight & Sound* for the feature on black British actors ('Burning illusions: black British film stardom', *S&S*, November).

Twenty years ago, after an Oscar nomination for her role in *Secrets & Lies*, Marianne Jean-Baptiste lamented that she had to go to America in order to work. At that time the only black British actor of note was Hugh Quarshie and he did not play leading roles in films. I wrote to *S&S* about the apparent racism in the British film industry; you did not publish my letter. Since then, matters

have improved and it is interesting that the establishment have seen fit to reward black actors with gongs: Adrian Lester, Sophie Okonedo, Chiwetel Ejiofor, David Oyelowo and David Harewood have all made the trip to Buckingham Palace, some at a rather early age.

Their working-class contemporaries have not been similarly rewarded, but the public schoolboys – Damian Lewis, Benedict Cumberbatch and Eddie Redmayne – have been. It would seem there is still discrimination in the industry and the country as a whole. But it's great to see that the BFI is showing *Secrets & Lies* (above) in the 'Black Star' season.

Keverne Weston London

an odd decision; I feel sure Tarkovsky would have hated her reductive psychoanalytical approach. The other extras are thin on the ground. The two-disc release of *Nostalgia* only contains two short interviews (besides the Wild essay). In contrast, the original Artificial Eye two-disc DVD of the film contained an abundance of additional material, including the documentary *Voyage in Time*, which shows Tarkovsky developing ideas for *Nostalgia*. Why haven't these been carried over to the new release?

David Allen Birmingham

LET THE RIGHT ONES IN

Interesting though Charles Gant's piece was regarding the poor box-office performance of a number of summer films (*The Numbers*, *S&S*, October), the article failed to address the most important factor in this situation: namely, the near impossibility of seeing many of these films. Arthouse, indie and European films have always struggled for a wide distribution, but unless one lives in London the situation seems to be getting worse.

There are Picturehouse and Everyman cinemas

relatively close to where I live. Increasingly, they are giving screen time to more mainstream/blockbuster films, and many titles which traditionally would have been screened at these venues no longer are. The Picturehouse does screen certain films I would like to see, but at one time only, on one day of the week (Tuesday at 6pm). Miss that slot and that's it.

Money is obviously a factor in planning repertoire, but to make it the only one is shortsighted. Younger film-goers are not encouraged to try something different and those who seek alternative fare have to wait for the DVD release. The Edinburgh Filmhouse and Sheffield Showroom are examples of good programme planning. If they can do it, why not others?

Louis Couplan By email

Additions and corrections

November p.60 *After Love*, Certificate 12A 100m 48s; p.64 *Nocturnal Animals*, Certificate 15 116m 35s; p.69 *Call of Heroes*, Certificate 15 119m 25s; p.69 *The Comedian's Guide to Survival*, Certificate 15 95m 43s; p.76 *In Pursuit of Silence*, Certificate PG 81m 32s; p.80 *Lo and Behold: Reveries of the Connected World*, Certificate PG 98m 18s; p.84 *NG83: When We Were B Boys*, Certificate 12A 72m 47s; p.91 *Sonita*, Certificate PG 91m 13s; p.93 *Train to Busan*, Certificate 15 118m 7s
UK distributor is Studiocanal Limited (not Bulldog Film Distribution)

VIRIDIANA



The implied *ménage à trois* that closes Luis Buñuel's *Viridiana* sees his heroine forsaking the spiritual life for more earthly pleasures

By Peter William Evans

At the end of Luis Buñuel's Palme d'Or-winning 1961 film, *Viridiana* (Silvia Pinal) abandons her dedication to acts of Christian charity after the catastrophic failure of her mission to offer refuge to the poor, and exchanges spiritual for physical comfort in the arms of her cousin Jorge (Francisco Rabal). Jorge is the illegitimate son of her dead uncle Don Jaime (Fernando Rey), who has come to live on his father's ramshackle estate where she has offered shelter to a group of beggars in an outbuilding. Viridiana's surrender to Jorge comes after she returns from a short trip to find the house has been trashed by the beggars during a riotous, unauthorised banquet, and has a close escape when one of them attempts to rape her. The very last scene shows Jorge, the maid Ramona (Margarita Lozano) and Viridiana playing *tute*, a Spanish card game, used here as code for Viridiana's resignation to life in a *ménage à trois*.

Buñuel came up with this ending after the original was vetoed by the censor. In that version, Viridiana is seen knocking on Jorge's door. He opens it, realises she wants to embark on a sexual relationship and pulls her gently inside. The camera stays outside as the door is shut, before Ramona emerges from the dining room, sits down on a chair and bursts into tears. Although at the time the Franco regime was trying to project a more liberal image of a country reliant on foreign tourism to boost its economy, an overtly sexual relationship outside marriage between a former

nun and a sexual libertine, even one played by a box-office matinee idol, was a step too far. Obligated to rewrite the scene, Buñuel found an acceptable but ironically more subversive solution.

The lead-up to the card game is prefaced by a sequence of six scenes: a daytime tracking shot of Rita (Teresa Rabal), Ramona's daughter, accompanied by an estate workman leading two cows and another worker pushing a wheelbarrow; an indoors daytime scene showing Jorge instructing a workman, brandishing a stick which he taps meaningfully on the arm of the sofa where Viridiana is seated; Viridiana preparing herself at night for a visit to Jorge's room; Rita hurling into a bonfire the crown of thorns Viridiana had worn as a devout nun; Jorge and Ramona together indoors; a return to the bonfire, now focusing on the crown of thorns aflame.

Rita's importance in the sequence is twofold. A portrayal of innocence but also of sexual curiosity, she is the film's chorus, witnessing key events, caught up in the perverse impulses of adults, providing silent or verbal commentary on the mysteries of the world around her. Disposing of Viridiana's discarded crown of thorns, she is Buñuel's appointed executioner in the *auto-da-fé* of Viridiana's past.

The burning of one of her holy keepsakes prepares the ground for Viridiana's submission, now to the body not of Christ but of Jorge. Francisco Rabal's virile good looks, unflinching dark eyes and aura of confident masculinity are difficult for Viridiana to resist. Her acquiescence

to him mixes sorrow for abandoning her faith with attraction to the Sadean aura of the stick-bearing Jorge. In extreme close-up, against a dark background, she studies herself in a chipped mirror, touches her loosened hair and licks her lower lip. This concession to vanity is nevertheless accompanied by tears, as if she is in mourning for her sacred past and resigned to a profane future. The frame created by the door she opens on her way out of her room reveals ropes hanging in the passageway outside. These and the gallows-shaped shadows on the wall are the expressionistic projection of Viridiana's trauma, which is caused by the loss of her illusions.

The gothic ambience of Don Jaime's estate, with its candle-lit rooms and sacred music, begins to be superseded by Jorge's modernising reforms through the introduction of electricity and pop music. Entering Jorge's room, Viridiana is troubled by the sight of Ramona. The novice who had obeyed the rule of her order in the cause of charity now realises, since Jorge has ordered Ramona not to leave the room, that she will be expected to defer to him in other ways. With her loosened flaxen hair and wan expression, Pinal maintains the look that so appealed to Don Jaime, the virgin in distress in a gothic painting. Viridiana becomes Jorge's nervous but willing novice of desire, responding to his questions about her reasons for knocking at his door only with silence and obedience. She allows him to usher her into the room to form with him and Ramona the threesome at *tute*, her submission further emphasised when Jorge grasps her hand to make her cut the deck. As the camera withdraws from the card players, we witness an example not only of spiritual disillusionment, but of human resilience and the survival of the life force in a psychologically wounded character. Viridiana joins Ramona and Jorge in the game of life. 

Obligated by the censor to rewrite the final scene, Buñuel found an acceptable but ironically more subversive solution



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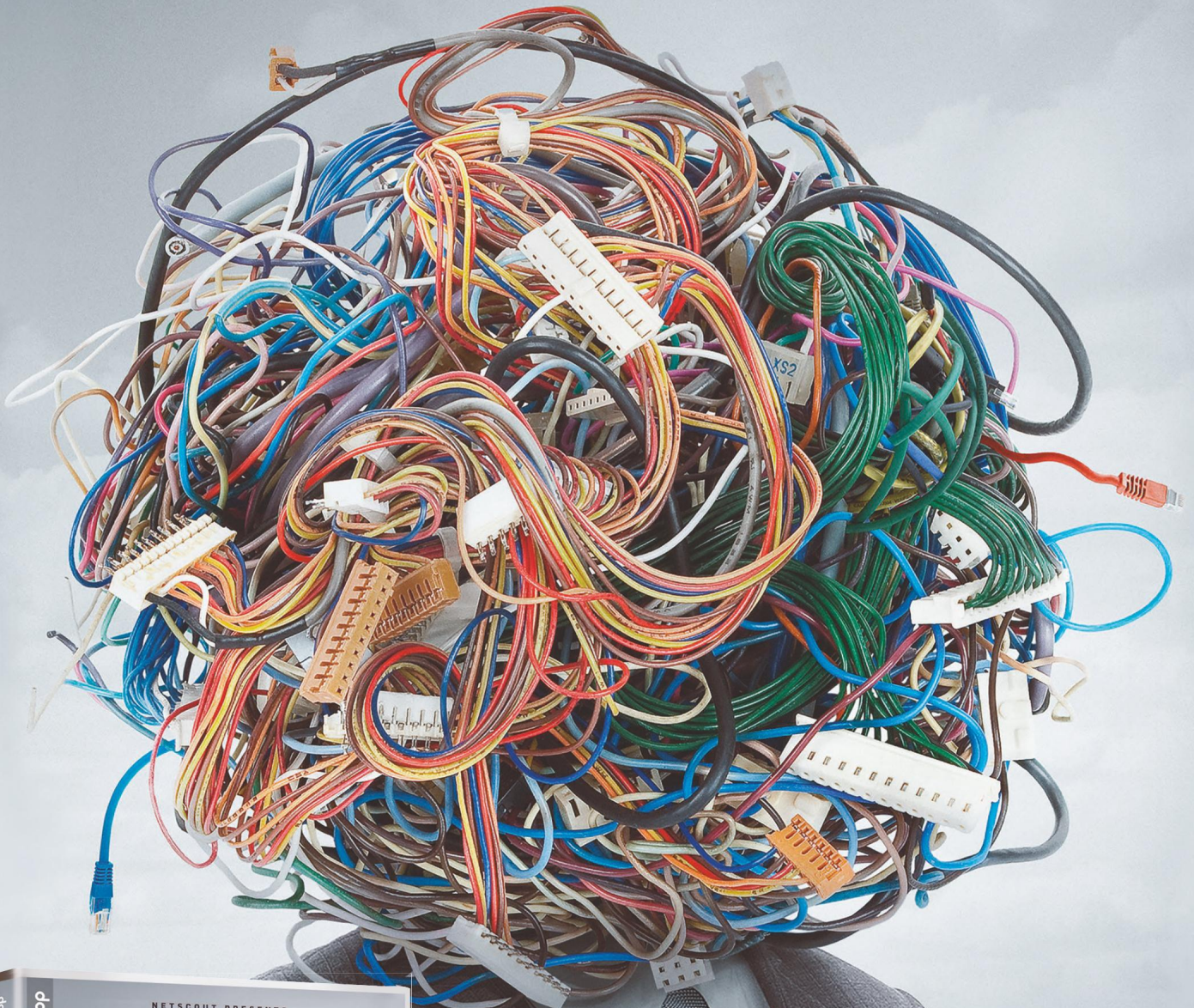
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